

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Sales at miners' actions
boost 'Militant' campaign

— PAGE 5

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Coal miners rally to defend health benefits

UMWA mobilizes 8,000 miners, retirees in Washington

BY MARY MARTIN

WASHINGTON—In the largest national demonstration of coal miners in many years, thousands of working and retired miners, family members, students, and other supporters rallied on the steps of the U.S. Capitol May 17. They demanded the government continue to fund cradle-to-grave health care for retired miners and their dependents. These benefits are now under severe attack by the coal bosses.

Organized by the United Mine Workers

Coal miners in New Mexico strike for contract—see page 6

of America (UMWA), the action here came on the heels of a series of meetings last fall in coal mining areas to defend the Coal Act. The struggle to defend the miners' health care legislation was the centerpiece of the recent UMWA convention, and health care and pensions have also been central issues in strikes by coal miners over the last two decades. Last fall, more than 40,000 people in coal mining areas signed petitions to save the Coal Act.

More than 100 union-organized buses rolled in here from West Virginia and Pennsylvania, and some 1,500 participants came from Alabama. The crowd of 8,000 included miners and their supporters from Alabama,



Militant/Stu Singer

Miners demanded government continue to guarantee lifetime health care for retirees

Colorado, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

Many retired miners came to the protest in wheelchairs. Others leaned on canes. The contingent of union members from Southern Illinois identified themselves with name

Continued on Page 6

Puerto Ricans demand: U.S. Navy out!

BY BETSEY STONE
AND RON RICHARDS

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico—"This is the beginning of a new stage in the fight to get the U.S. Navy out of Vieques," said Angel Figueroa Jaramillo of the electrical workers union UTIER. "We don't want one more

bomb. We don't want to wait three years. We want them out now!"

These words echoed the reaction of many electrical workers and other unionists to the U.S. military's resumption of bombing practice on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques and the May 4 removal of more than 200

protesters encamped on the U.S. Navy bombing range by a force of U.S. marshals, FBI agents, and U.S. marines. Figueroa Jaramillo is the education secretary of UTIER.

Far from being intimidated by the renewed war training and the mass evictions, many workers, fishermen, students, and others told *Militant* reporters they were more determined than ever to get the U.S. military out of Vieques for good.

In an interview, Jaramillo said that from discussions among unionists and media reports, it's clear that a majority of workers oppose the January agreement between President William Clinton and Puerto Rican governor Pedro Rosselló—made behind the backs of the Puerto Rican people—that accepts a continuation of the bombing with so-called inert bombs and a referendum in which Vieques residents who are registered U.S. voters could vote on whether the U.S. Navy stays or leaves by 2003.

Several workers going to their jobs at a large electrical plant here May 12 pointed to the danger of "inert" bombs setting off some of the unexploded bombs scattered about the firing range.

Many proudly described the four-hour work stoppage at their plant and the mobilization of thousands of electrical workers to picket U.S. government and military facilities the day after the U.S. police-military raid.

Since the May 4 raid, protests have continued to bubble around Puerto Rico on a daily basis. About 50 anti-Navy protesters defied the Navy May 13 by entering the restricted zone at Vieques and were arrested

Continued on Page 12

Farmers in Cuba discuss production, political challenges

BY MYRNA TOWNER

HAVANA—More than 800 Cuban farmers, delegates to the Ninth Congress of the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), gathered here May 15 for three days of discussion on the progress and challenges they face in their campaign to raise food production. Cuban vice president Raúl Castro, who is also minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, has attended the congress and is participating actively in the discussions.

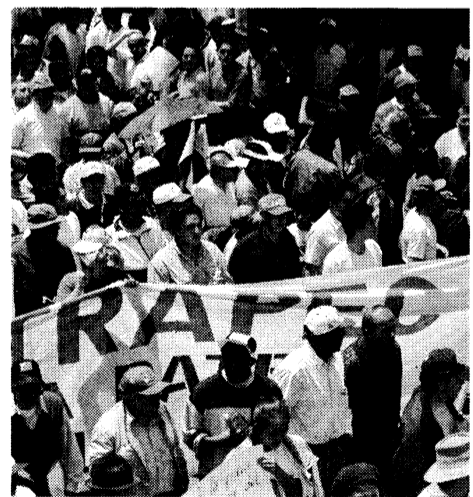
At the front of the convention hall is the slogan: "We are present in the economic and political struggle!"

Two other banners contain quotes from Cuban president Fidel Castro, "This is not only a battle for food, this is also a great political battle, an ideological battle," and from Raúl Castro, "Beans are as important as guns, or more so."

ANAP was founded in 1961 through the incorporation of various farmers' and ranchers' organizations and more than 100,000 small producers who gained title to their land through the agrarian reform. That defining act of the Cuban revolution was led by the workers and farmers government that was consolidated in 1959 following an armed insurrection and mass popular uprising against the U.S.-backed dictatorship of

Continued on Page 14

New wave of labor and farm protests in Ecuador



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

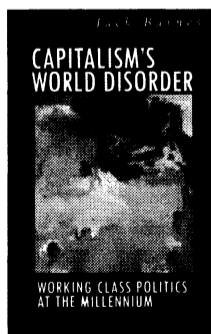
Part of 50,000-strong May Day march in Quito, capital city of Ecuador.

BY HILDA CUZCO
AND JUAN VILLAGÓMEZ

QUITO, Ecuador—A new wave of protests, including a strike by about 200,000 teachers, hospital workers, and other public employees, is flaring up in Ecuador against austerity measures decreed by the government of President Gustavo Noboa. He has called on working people to accept a "quota of sacrifice" in order to meet the

Continued on Page 7

FROM PATHFINDER



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Protests: 'Send boy home to Cuba, end U.S. embargo' — page 8

Farmers rally in New Jersey to save fellow fighter's land

BY CONNIE ALLEN

BUENA BORO, New Jersey—A group of 50 farmers and their supporters gathered here May 7 in support of Anna Marie Codario, a farmer who is fighting to save her land. The rally was organized by the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association (BFAA) to protest government discrimination against Black and women farmers and demand fair prices for family farmers. The next day, they joined a demonstration in Washington by 250 farmers against the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Some of the farmers and their family members drove hundreds of miles to the event. They came from Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Virginia, and North Carolina. Members of Family Farm Defenders, including a dairy farmer, flew in from Wisconsin.

"This is real good. Women farmers working with Black farmers," said Willie Adams, a Georgia chicken farmer. "We have to do more with family farmers to bring an awareness to America of what is really going on."

Codario told the gathering, "I've been a squatter on my own land since 1984 because I knew something was wrong. We teamed up with the Black farmers because they knew the USDA did something wrong." A bank with a lien on Codario's property foreclosed on her farm in 1984. She had been denied services by the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), which purchased her farm and placed it in inventory. She has refused to leave her land and maintains its upkeep.

Codario introduced Mary Visconti, who is also a squatter on her land, and Mary Ordille, another farmer subjected to foreclosure. Codario and Ordille, both farmers in Atlantic County, New Jersey, and Mary Visconti, a farmer in nearby Cumberland County, filed claims in 1997 against the USDA for sex discrimination.

Visconti explained to the crowd, "I am ashamed to say, we had no idea what has happened to the Black farmers. We were isolated."

Ordille told the demonstrators how she happened to view a newscast on CNN of a protest of farmers who are Black and called the other two women, saying, "You won't believe what I just saw—there are Black farmers who are fighting like we are." Ordille explained that she has paid \$370,000 on a \$185,000 loan since losing her farm. "Now they are trying to take my home," she said.

The New Jersey farmers have been working with the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association since they saw the news program on the class-action discrimination suit BFAA filed against the USDA.

'No justice in America'

"There is no justice in America for the Black or the poor. We went to court and won, and it's like nothing happened," said Eddie Slaughter, a farmer from south Georgia and vice president of BFAA. "No one who has nothing to lose can speak for me. We can do something for ourselves. We can come together. It's time to start looking to each other."

Gary Grant, president of BFAA, chaired the rally. He explained the ongoing discrimination faced by farmers who are Black, particularly those who are part of the class-action suit. Some of them have been protesting the aftermath of the government settlement of the *Pigford vs. Glickman* case. In 1997, more than 1,000 Black farmers initiated the class-action lawsuit, asking for \$3 billion in compensation for discriminatory practices by the USDA between 1983 and 1997.

They reached an out-of-court settlement in April 1999 that includes: forgiveness of the plaintiffs' debts to the government, a one-time tax-free payment of \$50,000, and the option to forfeit the agreement and pursue an individual case before an arbitrator.

About 18,000 farmers filed claims under the consent decree. The USDA has denied the claims of more than 40 percent of those applying for \$50,000. Some farmers have faced harassment by banks and the FBI,



Militant/John Staggs

Farmers protest May 8 in Washington against U.S. Department of Agriculture. The day before, dozens rallied to defend Anna Marie Codario's farm in New Jersey and fight government discrimination against Black and women farmers.

among other obstacles.

Charlie Scott, a farmer from Tennessee, came with two other Tennessee farmers. He used to grow cotton until the Farm Service Agency (FSA) refused him loans and economic assistance. Now he grows beans and corn on 148 acres that was his father's farm.

"They gave me \$50,000 and told me I should go home and be quiet," said Scott. "There is no way that is going to happen. I'm here to see that all of the promises they made in the consent decree are carried out. I still can't get a loan."

'I have a right to farm'

"I put in for an operating loan this year with the FSA. The same agents, same offices, turned it down," he continued. "They haven't paid any of the taxes on the debts. They promised they would stop the foreclosures on the farms of complainants in the consent decree. But the foreclosures continue in Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, Georgia. I like farming better than anything I've ever done. I have a right to farm. If labor and farmers could come together, we could get something done."

Randy Jasper, a farmer who is white, also spoke at the rally. He has a dairy herd of 100 and farms 600 acres of grain with his son in Wisconsin. Jasper and his daughter-in-law, who also work jobs off the farm for more income because farming does not provide enough for their living expenses, came with two other members of Family Farm Defenders.

Jasper said in an interview, "We will be in D.C. tomorrow. I wish we could have brought more people. These two events may not have a direct effect on dairy prices, but they show that all farmers need to work together. We are all agricultural producers. In Wisconsin we have lost six dairy farms per day for the last six years."

Jasper added, "Rallies like today are the secret—everyone coming together. The hearings Congress holds are so people can blow off steam. We've been told that everything in the economy is great except for the dumb farmers who can't think big enough or aren't good managers. But we are finding out that isn't true. Workers are in trouble too."

Farmers from neighboring counties in New Jersey joined the rally. Joe Bartee, a vegetable farmer who is Black from Norma, told the demonstrators how he faced discrimination at the produce auctions. "Last year Vineland Produce paid me \$7 per bushel for wax beans," he said. "That same day they paid a white farmer \$14 for a bushel of wax beans."

Marge Niedda spoke for the Farm Workers Support Committee (CATA), which supports farm workers in southern New Jersey and mushroom workers in Pennsylvania. "We support the effort you are making. Everyone together will make a difference," she declared. Niedda attended the rally with José Guzmán, a mushroom worker who was fired from Kaolin farms in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, during a strike to unionize in 1993. Kaolin workers are still fighting for a contract.

Two students came from the Public Interest Research Group at the Rutgers University campus in Camden, New Jersey. They invited farmers to participate in protests at the Republican and Democratic national conventions this summer.

Several teachers who work with Codario attended in an expression of support, as did a local politician who described the discrimination she faced as the first female county clerk in her area. A local Baptist church provided assistance for farmers who had traveled long distances. Some of the congregation attended the farm protest.

THE MILITANT

Defend Cuban revolution

The Clinton administration's refusal to send Elián González with his family and friends home to Cuba highlights the U.S. rulers' unrelenting hatred of the Cuban revolution. The 'Militant' explains what's at stake in defending the workers and farmers government there. Don't miss a single issue!



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Editor: MARTÍN KOPPEL

Business Manager: MAURICE WILLIAMS

Editorial Staff: Hilda Cuzco, Greg McCartan,

Brian Williams, and Maurice Williams.

Young Socialists column editor:

ELENA TATE

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Cop killing of young Maori sparks protests

BY MICHAEL TUCKER
AND FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—"The police are murderers," declared Raewyn Wallace after police shot and killed her son April 30 in the Taranaki town of Waitara. That reaction was shared by many angry residents in the town and other working people across the country.

Steven Wallace, a 23-year-old Maori university student, was shot in the town's main street early in the morning after being confronted by three cops. He had been breaking windows in the town center, targeting the local police station and fire station. Friends and family said his behavior was out of character. Five shots were fired, four entering Wallace's chest.

For at least 20 minutes until an ambulance arrived, Wallace lay on the street dying and asking for help, while the cops—their guns still drawn—refused to allow anyone to offer him aid or comfort.

Although Wallace had no firearm, police claim the shooting was justified because he was carrying a softball bat that he had been using to break windows. But at least one witness, who was standing only meters away when the cops opened fire, said Wallace had already put down the bat when police shot him. Several witnesses have spoken out, describing the events and criticizing the police for the shooting.

One witness, while expressing sympathy for the police, told a *Militant* sales team that the cops' mood changed after Wallace broke a window in their police car. At that point, according to the police account, two of the cops went and got their guns. A minute later Wallace was shot.

"But for the dramatic nature of the outcome, much of what took place here was not remarkable or unusual," said Tom Hunt

in a telephone interview with the *Militant* from Waitara May 7. Hunt, a member of Te Atiawa, the main Maori tribe in the area, has been prominent in protesting the killing. He explained the growing anger among Maori and other working people in the region at mounting incidents of harassment by police, including displays of force in response to even trivial incidents, and the increased carrying of firearms by the cops.

Traditionally in New Zealand, police have not worn sidearms. But today "the presence of guns in the hands of the police in Waitara and Taranaki is standard operating procedure," Hunt explained.

"Many Maori believe that if there is an incident and the police are coming, they will be coming armed. It doesn't need to be a particularly serious incident. It could be a minor vandalism and they will show up with guns," he said.

The day after the shooting two Maori sovereignty flags were raised over Waitara's main street in a show of protest. As police swarmed into the town, they were greeted with taunts of "murderers" by residents.

In another show of defiance, young people broke windows in the town on the evening of May 5, challenging police to confront them. Other residents intervened to defuse the situation.

Of Waitara's population of 6,000, 40 percent are Maori. The number of registered unemployed in the town is 1,000, 50 percent of the workforce, reflecting the closure over recent years of a major meat processing plant, clothing factory, and car assembly plant.

Steven Wallace was a successful student and sports player, and known as a speaker of Maori and participant in Maori cultural groups. He had completed two years of a university degree and had returned to

Waitara to take a break from his studies. His achievements and popularity have made it difficult for police to demonize him as a "criminal." More than 600 people attended Wallace's funeral in Waitara May 3. Earlier, hundreds more had turned out for a funeral procession through the town.

The shooting has dominated news headlines here, opening a major political discussion. In a statement on May 4, widely criticized by other ruling-class voices and the police, Prime Minister Helen Clark questioned whether police were pursuing a "shoot to kill policy" and expressed concern at "the underlying bad relations between Maori and police in Taranaki."

"It is serious and we're very concerned about it because you can't have good administration of the law when a section of the community is very alienated," Clark said. A delegation of members of parliament who are Maori went to Waitara for Wallace's funeral.

A report commissioned by the Legal Services Board late last year highlighted wide-

spread racist views among police in Taranaki. It quoted one senior police officer as saying that Taranaki is populated by "endless succeeding generations of scum being produced by some Maori families."

Although an initial court order obtained by police barred identification of the cop, that was overturned on appeal by the *New Zealand Herald*. Following convention, however, most news media, including the *Herald* declined to publish the cop's name. Breaking with that tradition, the weekly *National Business Review* named the cop on the front page of its May 12 issue.

In an editorial May 9, the *Herald* said that in opposing name suppression it had merely wanted to reveal that the cop is an "experienced officer" who "is also part-Maori" in the hope that this would undermine "accusations of racism being thrown at the police" and dispel "the distorted assumptions that were forming" following the killing.

Felicity Coggan is a member of the National Distribution Union.

Airport workers more confident after 17-month union battle in UK



Militant/Phil Waterhouse
Skychef workers' contingent on 1999 May Day march in London. Lufthansa bosses settled after long lockout. "Their problem was we never went away," said unionist.

BY PETE CLIFFORD

LONDON—"We never lost our respect and dignity, because we stood up and fought," explained Javid Upaday, leader of 273 Transport and General Workers' Union members who struck for 17 months at Heathrow International Airport against a union-busting lockout at Lufthansa Skychef.

The lockout began after union members at this airline catering firm held a one-day strike to protest changes in work practices and pay. Upaday reported that by early April most strikers had signed a national compensation settlement with the company that was recommended by the union officials, and that as of April 20 the officials had ended their action. "We didn't get everything, but it was time to call it a day," he said.

"Lufthansa learned a bitter lesson. They were forced to make the settlement," Upaday declared. "They thought their problem had gone away when they sacked us. At the beginning they even claimed there was no dispute, but their problem was we never went away."

The strikers, who in their majority are originally from India, sustained a determined fight, including 24-hour pickets till the end. "It cost Lufthansa too," Upaday stated. "In all this time they got no new contracts with the airlines. This sends a message to other companies at Heathrow."

He said the company came forward with this package after strikers had launched pickets at the London offices of the airlines they service. "That, along with the rallies we held, had an impact." Last year several hundred strikers and supporters attended mass picket lines and rallies at the plant gates on May 3 and November 20, and 600 marched through nearby Southall on Feb. 20, 1999.

The settlement gives all former strikers £400 for each year worked with the company, and a flat amount of £7,500 for the 114 who stayed on strike without getting

other work. Up to 60 strikers who had filed a legal claim for wrongful dismissal because they were either sick or not rostered to work the day of the original strike are to get up to £3,000 for not pursuing court action. The total payout came to £2 million.

Many strikers remain dissatisfied with the deal, although they signed up feeling they were offered no alternative. Some 30 strikers have yet to sign. One of these, Jaswinder Pal, said, "We have not achieved our goal of getting the jobs back, and there's no proper compensation." He added, "We should have pursued the tribunals."

Nonetheless, Upaday said the workers made some achievements. "Because we stuck together through the strike, we are now more union-minded, we know a bit about fighting," he said.

Jaswinder Pal remarked, "Before the strike I was interested in doing things, but never went to marches. Now I've been on May Day marches and to the Rover workers march." On May 1, 1999, some 60 Skychef strikers led a 3,000-strong union march through London. On April 1 nine of the strikers joined a march of 80,000 against job cuts at the Rover car plant in Birmingham.

Meanwhile, union action has developed at other airline catering firms at Heathrow. Drivers and loaders organized by the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) at the airport's largest catering company, Gate Gourmet, organized a "work to rule" in March to protest a derisory pay offer. The action was ended by a union mass meeting after the company agreed to a substantial increase. And at International Catering, where the company currently does not recognize the union, workers responded to a similar low-pay offer with a union protest rally in late April.

Pete Clifford is a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Washington farm workers build march

BY SCOTT BREEN

MT. VERNON, Washington—Two hundred people marched four miles through the Mt. Vernon area of western Washington State May 7 in solidarity with farm workers. The youthful march was led by members of the Chicano student group MEChA and other students from nearby colleges. A group of 20 farm workers drove over from eastern Washington to attend, as did a delegation of Steelworkers locked out by Kaiser Aluminum. The area is the center of the tulip and flower-growing farms in this state.

The march, which received the endorsement of several unions, including the Central Labor Councils of Whatcom and Skagit Counties, culminated in a rally and fiesta at Skagit Valley Community College.

At the rally, Guadalupe Gamboa, executive director of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) in Washington State, announced a June 4 march in Pasco, Washington, to demand higher wages for cherry harvest workers as well as a new amnesty law for undocumented workers. He denounced the current "amnesty" bills being discussed in Congress as a "cruel hoax—workers will never get amnesty under these bills."

According to Gamboa, there are nearly 40,000 farm workers and 15,000 fruit packers at work during the harvest season in eastern Washington.

Arnulfo Rodriguez, a farm worker from Mattawa in central Washington, explained, "Our goal is to have the union—which is the workers—respected" by the bosses.

The UFW presently has only one contract, with Chateau Ste. Michelle vineyards in

Sunnyside. "The employers consider us the burros of the workplace," Rodriguez said. He declared that for many farm workers like himself "our hearts are back in Mexico, but our stomachs and minds are here—let's get organized here."

He urged support for the June 4 march, stating, "Together we can all advance." According to the bilingual leaflet advertising the action, "Growers have paid the same piece-rate wages for the last 20 years, while their earnings have increased 2 or 3 times."

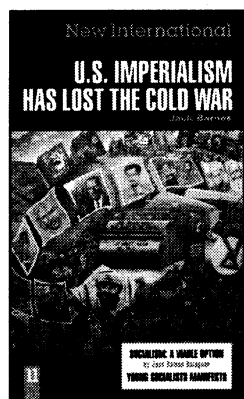
Rodriguez reported that farm workers have established organizing committees in seven cities in eastern Washington and have voted to organize another march in support of farm workers on August 8 in Mattawa, a center of the apple industry in the state.

Organizing efforts in the eastern region got an important boost when packing workers at Yakima Fruit and Cold Storage in Wapato voted for a union on May 4. The Teamsters union won the election, overseen by the NLRB, by a 101-75 vote.

Most of the workers in this Yakima Valley packinghouse are immigrants from Mexico and have been farm workers or have friends and relatives who are farm workers.

This is the second fruit packing warehouse to be unionized, joining Stemilt Warehouse in Wenatchee. A third warehouse organizing drive at Washington Fruit, in Yakima, was narrowly defeated one and a half years ago. The Teamsters union contested the election, and workers are awaiting a decision by the NLRB.

Scott Breen is a member of International Association of Machinists Local 751.



In New International no. 11

- Two programmatic documents of the Socialist Workers Party: **U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War** by Jack Barnes and **The Communist Strategy of Party Building Today** by Mary-Alice Waters.
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From bookstores, including those listed on page 12

'Militant' to hit presses, NY streets same day

BY GREG MCCARTAN

Nearly 80 socialist workers and young socialists will hit the streets every Thursday in the New York-New Jersey area, armed with the latest issue of the *Militant* to sell at plant gates, on college campuses, at strikes and protest actions, and on street corners.

A step that is making this possible is that the *Militant* editor and staff are organizing to complete the paper earlier each Thursday, turning all the pages over to the print shop by late morning. The shop produces Pathfinder books and pamphlets, the weekly *Militant*, and the monthly *Perspectiva Mundial*. This means the shop can give the editor page proofs to catch errors or problems prior to plates being made, print the paper, and ship bundles and subscriptions before 4:30 p.m. each week.

Getting out every Thursday after the *Militant* is printed will build on the success of a May 11 sales mobilization. On that day, socialists workers and Young Socialists members joined actions to defend Cuba's sovereignty and demand the U.S. government return Elián González and his family to Cuba. They also set up sidewalk tables and joined strike actions across New York City and in northern New Jersey.

In New York last week, teams went to a strike rally of workers at Lincoln Center, to midtown to introduce the socialist publications to garment workers getting off work, to several street corners in Upper Manhattan, and to Hunter College and Borough of Manhattan Community College. Debbie Lazar, on the Hunter College team, reports

lively exchanges with students there and a lot of interest in the *Militant* and Pathfinder books.

Militant editor Martín Koppel reports that a construction worker from Colombia met the team at Union Square during the May 11 picket line on Cuba. He later called the offices of the paper asking where he could again meet the socialists in order to purchase a subscription and *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, by Jack Barnes. Koppel explained a team regularly sets up a table of socialist literature at Union Square on Sundays. The worker stopped by, bought a *Militant* subscription from the team, discussed what he had been reading in underlined copies of *Perspectiva Mundial*, and decided to attend a Militant Labor Forum later in the week.

Interest in the Young Socialists

Nancy Rosenstock, a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, said socialist workers in Newark sold five subscriptions to the *Militant* last Thursday alone. "We had three teams out, in addition to participating in the New York demonstration," Rosenstock said. "This week we plan to send a team to Rutgers University in New Brunswick, to Irvington, where there have been protests against police brutality, and to sell at garment shops in Newark. We met a young person at one street table who is interested in the Young Socialists. She said she planning to return next week to join the team for more discussion and sales."



Copy editor Brian Williams marks off laid-out *Militant* page on white board. Below it, similar chart shows production of *Perspectiva Mundial* pages.

The staff of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* are also building on accomplishments over the last several weeks to produce both publications in a more timely way and with a content that serves the needs of vanguard militants among workers, farmers, and youth.

The first step, already under way, is to involve more systematically a number of socialist workers and youth across the

United States in translating *Militant* articles for each issue of *Perspectiva Mundial*. This is how the special May issue of *Perspectiva Mundial* was produced in two days, translating a *Militant* editorial and feature article that presented a working-class voice in opposition to the April 22 immigration police assault in Miami. The magazine also responded to the U.S. government's intervention to retake the island of Vieques from Puerto Ricans in order to reassert its military presence and naval exercises there.

Perspectiva Mundial publishes each month a select number of articles from the *Militant* chosen by the editor and translated by staff members and volunteers around the country. Translation and production of the paper is being reorganized to be completed in a measured way throughout the month, with one-quarter of the magazine translated, laid out, and prepared for the print shop each week. *Militant* staff members will also lay out the paper along with the *PM* staff.

Setting an earlier publication time for the *Militant* each week puts a premium on worker-correspondents around the world sending stories to the *Militant* no later than Saturday of each week in order to be included in the coming issue. That allows the editor and staff to prepare late-breaking copy and photographs, such as the articles on the mine workers rally in Washington and the Cuban farmers congress featured in this week's issue.

To keep track of the daily production of both the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, a large white board for *PM*'s production has been added next to that of the *Militant* on one of the walls of the editorial office. One line is drawn through a "page" when the layout is complete, and a "X" when the completed electronic file of the page is ready for the print shop.

Hunger strikers protest Illinois prison conditions

BY ELYSE HATHAWAY

TAMMS, Illinois—Thirty-nine prisoners have been on a hunger strike protesting brutal conditions at the Tamms Correctional Center in Alexander County, Illinois.

The hunger strike started May 1 at breakfast when 149 inmates refused their meal. Then 168 refused lunch and a similar number did not eat dinner. The protest has continued since then. There are 273 inmates at the facility.

Tamms was opened in 1998 as a super-maximum-security prison, part of "Illinois' sprawling penal empire," as the regional daily *Southern Illinoisan* put it in a recent

editorial. All the inmates are in solitary confinement. They are locked up in their cells at least 23 hours a day, with a brief period outside for exercise. They have no common activity or meals with each other. They must communicate by shouting from their cells to each other, which is how word of the hunger strike got around.

A major issue that outraged prisoners and sparked the action according to Gene Snyder, an attorney representing some of the inmates in a lawsuit against the state, is a policy requiring prisoners to "renounce their gang affiliation" and then finger fellow inmates as supposed gang members in order to gain release to a lower-security prison. Another issue is the slowness of the hearings for release.

Other demands include that authorities transfer prisoners needing mental health treatment to a proper mental health facility, provide adequate footwear not causing injury, end indiscriminate tear-gassing of inmates, and stop the use of "meal-loaf" as punishment. "Meal-loaf" is a baked mixture of canned spinach, powdered milk, applesauce, hamburger, flour, and ketchup

that is served instead of regular food.

On May 4, Nic Howell, a spokesman for the Department of Corrections, told the *Southern Illinoisan* that "36 of the 61 [hunger strikers] refused [to voluntarily see the doctor] so we just used tactical squads to remove them from their cells. [This] is standard operating procedure for anyone who refuses an order. We will assemble a tactical team to go in and do whatever needs to be done." Pepper spray may have been used on the prisoners by the tactical teams.

Howell said the only changes he expects at the prison is "just some guys losing some weight, I guess," and suggested that 10 percent of the prison population is mentally ill at one time or another.

The editors of the *Southern Illinoisan* don't hid their contempt for the working people behind bars. "When a group of Tamms inmates protests conditions, the public's collective heart is likely to bleed...onion juice," they assert, adding, "Still, there is that troublesome Eighth Amendment to the Constitution—the one that bans cruel and unusual punishment, even against cruel and unusual people."

Socialist Workers 2000 National Campaign \$80,000 Fund

City	Goal	Paid	%
Washington	3,300	2,907	88%
Charlotte*	1,850	935	51%
Des Moines	1,200	593	49%
Philadelphia	3,000	1,450	48%
Boston	3,750	1,575	42%
Chippewa Falls	500	200	40%
Twin Cities	5,000	2,000	40%
Birmingham	3,500	1,250	36%
Pittsburgh	3,000	1,030	34%
Atlanta	3,100	1,000	32%
Seattle	6,000	1,725	29%
Los Angeles	6,000	1,700	28%
Chicago	7,000	1,700	24%
Detroit	3,000	720	24%
St. Louis	1,300	200	15%
Cape Girardeau	565	80	14%
Brooklyn	2,800	350	13%
Upper Manhattan	2,000	240	12%
Houston	5,000	490	10%
Cleveland	2,250	75	3%
Newark	4,000	100	3%
N.Y. Garment Dist.	4,000	50	1%
Allentown	1,000		0%
Fort Collins	250		0%
Fresno	300		0%
Miami	2,500		0%
San Francisco	3,500		0%
Other		250	
Total	\$79,665	\$20,620	26%
Goal	\$80,000		

Brazil teachers fight to raise wages



Thousands of elementary and high school teachers march in São Paulo in early May. Since farmers and landless rural workers launched a wave of mass protests in late April demanding agrarian reform, transport workers and teachers have organized strike actions to defend their plummeting living standards and to oppose government austerity measures.

Young Socialists Fund Drive March 15-June 1

City	Goal	Raised	%
Washington	200	130	65%
Miami	400	233	58%
Birmingham	450	225	50%
New York	1,000	358	36%
Detroit	550	189	34%
Seattle	350	120	34%
Chicago	800	205	26%
Newark	700	142	20%
Twin Cities	650	115	18%
Tucson	200	20	10%
Atlanta	300		0%
Cleveland	350		0%
Fort Collins	75		0%
Fresno	200		0%
Los Angeles	450		0%
Philadelphia	500		0%
Santa Cruz	250		0%
Valdosta	200		0%
San Francisco		20	
Other		100	
Total	\$7,625	\$1,757	23%

Sub drive gets boost from sales to miners

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Last week was one of the best weeks yet in the subscription drive and the campaign is now going full steam ahead. Campaigners of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* jumped into action this week visiting a picket line at midnight just when miners in New Mexico walked off the job. They also joined coal miners and their supporters at the May 17 rally in Washington, D.C., called by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA).

In several places participants in the drive reported selling out their bundles of the paper. The warehouse storage of last week's issue of the *Militant* was virtually cleaned out as extra orders of the paper were requested by supporters across the country and a large bundle was sent out for the miners' rally.

Campaigners in every city mapped out plans to meet the goals they decided on for the subscription drive, and began carrying them out right away. Across the country socialist workers and Young Socialists deepened their participation in strikes and labor solidarity actions, mobilizations by coal miners, protests to demand a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal, and picket lines to defend the Cuban revolution. Teams setting up tables of socialist literature found substantial interest on college campuses and street corners in the communist viewpoint expressed in articles in the *Militant*.

Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists who are members of industrial unions discussed how they can meet and exceed their goals as well. Several indicate they can raise their goals, increasing the number of co-workers and fellow unionists reading the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*.

Socialists in a good number of cities report they will meet their goals by May 22, the original end of the drive. With the one-

week extension through Memorial Day weekend, the *Militant* encourages supporters in every city possible to raise their goals to reflect the extra week to win new readers. This will ensure the international goals are met, in addition to the local goals.

"We sold about 37 *Militant* subscriptions, 325 copies of the paper, 5 copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder*, and a lot of other Pathfinder titles to coal miners and their supporters at the demonstration," said Janice Lynn, an airline worker in Washington. Thousands of miners came to the action in buses from Kentucky, Virginia, Alabama, and elsewhere to demand the government keep its commitment to provide lifetime health care for UMWA retirees. Lynn said they set up tables at various locations at the event. Many workers had seen the paper before from sales teams that sold at the mine portals.

"People wanted to talk, saying this is a life and death question," said Stu Singer, a rail worker. "One woman, a widow of a miner, who bought a paper from me said, 'I just had open heart surgery. If I didn't have the miners' health card I would be dead right now.'"

Mike Fitzsimmons, a Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Senate from Ohio, introduced himself to dozens of miners from the state, offering his solidarity in the fight. Fitzsimmons is a garment workers and member of UNITE. Ohio supporters of the *Militant* sold seven subscriptions during the day.

Socialist workers from New York sold 10 subscriptions; eight were sold by supporters from Washington, D.C.; and five each from Newark, New Jersey, and Birmingham, Alabama.

Miners at the P&M McKinley mine in Gallop, New Mexico, walked out at midnight May 14 (story on page 6). Socialist



Militant/Martin Koppel

Selling *Militant* at May 11 rally in New York defending Cuba's sovereignty

workers were there expressing their solidarity. Showing the *Militant* around, they said almost everyone was familiar with the paper from sales teams over past years. The team sold two subscriptions during their discussions with the strikers. Altogether they sold five *Militant* subscriptions and 40 papers after visiting other mine portals, including one at the Kayenta mine in Arizona whose contract is expiring soon.

The subscription drive in Atlanta received a boost from the election campaign of Paul Cornish who is the Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress in Georgia. Supporters of the candidate set up a campaign table at the May 13-14 Auburn Avenue festival where they sold two subscriptions to the *Militant*, 10 copies of the paper, and sev-

eral Pathfinder titles.

"We plan to continue to help in the international campaign and to meet our other goals," wrote Jill Fein, who heads the circulation campaign there. "We plan to have a team going door-to-door in apartment complexes where Mexican construction workers live. We are also organizing a team to join with others in Charlotte, North Carolina, to sell more subscriptions and help build a public meeting for the Socialist Workers election campaign there."

In the final two weeks, partisans of the subscription campaign will be pulling out all the stops to make the drive. In many areas they are raising their orders to maximize sales efforts at political events, on the job, at plant gates, and elsewhere.

2,000 rally for Abu-Jamal

BY LARRY LANE

SAN FRANCISCO—Two thousand people rallied and marched through the downtown streets here May 13 demanding the release of death row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. Most of the marchers, many of

them young, were from this area. Several busloads came from Los Angeles and other parts of southern California. A handful came from Washington, Oregon, and Arizona.

Many of the marchers carried signs calling for the abolition of the death penalty. Members of the National Campaign Against the Death Penalty circulated a petition calling on the U.S. government to impose a moratorium on death sentences. Some carried signs demanding justice for other prisoners who have been framed up and victimized by the police and the courts.

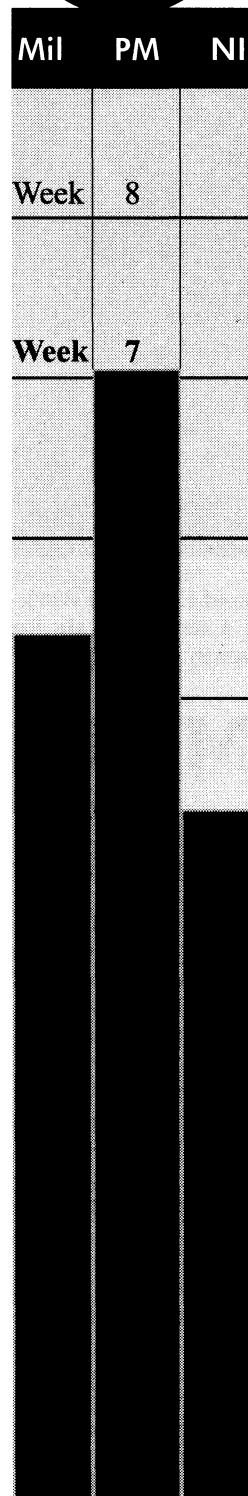
One group that attracted attention at the protest was three members of International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) Local 1422 from Charleston, South Carolina. They had been involved in a successful struggle to prevent a shipping company from using nonunion labor on the Charleston docks. Following a cop assault in January, several ILA members were arrested and face trumped-up charges.

ILA member Charles Brave Jr. explained that they had been invited to Oakland to attend a meeting at Service Employees International Union Local 250 headquarters called "Labor for Mumia," attended by 100 labor officials and members.

At the rally at the Civic Center, ILA Local 1422 president Kenneth Riley spoke about their fight and how the union had joined the march in Columbia, South Carolina, to bring down the Confederate battle flag that has been flying over the state capitol. He pledged support for Abu-Jamal. The ILA members also circulated a leaflet asking for support to the Dockworkers Defense Fund, which has been established to aid the framed-up workers, and said they would return to this area in June.

Speakers at the rally projected an August 13 demonstration at the Democratic Party national convention in Los Angeles. The Freedom for Mumia Coalition plans to protest Vice president Albert Gore's failure to support freedom for Abu-Jamal and denounce Edward Rendell, national chairman of the Democratic Party, who is from Philadelphia and was the prosecutor in the original case in which Abu-Jamal was convicted.

Where we stand at end of week 7



Militant/PM Subscription Drive March 25-May 28

Country	Militant			PM		NI	
	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold	Goal	Sold
Sweden	12	10	83%	4	3	6	7
Australia	12	9	75%	1		5	2
New Zealand							
Christchurch	12	10	83%	1		3	1
Auckland	20	10	50%	1	1	3	2
N.Z. total	32	20	63%	2	1	6	3
United States							
Cleveland	25	29	116%	8	6	5	3
Allentown	15	16	107%	2	1	5	
Atlanta	30	30	100%	10	7	12	8
Los Angeles*	60	54	90%	40	35	30	25
Washington	30	25	83%	10	7	11	9
Charlotte	10	8	80%	3	1	5	2
Chippewa Falls*	25	19	76%	18	13	10	7
San Francisco	50	37	74%	20	9	25	7
St. Louis	15	11	73%	5	4	10	5
Chicago	40	29	73%	15	7	15	14
Seattle	40	29	73%	12	6	12	2
Twin Cities	35	25	71%	8	3	10	
Newark	65	45	69%	25	24	25	13
Des Moines	30	20	67%	15	10	10	4
Philadelphia	35	23	66%	10	10	15	8
Boston	35	22	63%	10	9	15	6
Birmingham	45	27	60%	5	3	15	3
Tucson	5	3	60%	2		2	2
Pittsburgh	25	14	56%	2	1	8	
Cape Girardeau	12	6	50%	4	1	4	
Miami	40	20	50%	15	10	20	11
Houston	35	15	43%	15	9	12	6
Detroit	45	19	42%	8	2	15	
Fort Collins	12	5	42%	1	1	4	1
Fresno	12	5	42%	8	8	6	
Upper Manhattan	55	15	27%	20	13	20	7
N.Y. Garment Dist	60	11	18%	20	14	20	10
Brooklyn	55	10	18%	10	5	25	
Other		1					
U.S. total	941	573	61%	321	219	366	153
France	4	2	50%	4		20	13
Canada							
Toronto	25	13	52%	6	4	20	13
Vancouver	25	9	36%	5	2	12	11
Montreal	16		0%	6	1	15	6
Canada total	66	22	33%	17	7	47	30
Iceland	5	1	20%	1		5	1
United Kingdom							
London	40	9	23%	8	4	20	10
Manchester	24	3	13%	2	1	12	1
UK total	64	12	19%	10	5	32	11
Int'l totals	1136	649	59%	360	235	487	220
Goal/Should be	1100	858	78%	300	234	450	351
*raised goal							

Militant/PM Subscription Drive in the Unions						
	Militant			PM		NI
	Goal/Sold	%	Goal/Sold	Goal/Sold	Goal/Sold	
U.S.						
IAM	45 28	62%	10 7	20 8		
USWA	40 23	58%	3 2	16 3		
UAW	17 7	41%	3 1	9 3		
UTU	32 13	41%	3 2	10 3		
UFCW	35 13	37%	20 12	15 6		
UNITE	35 8	23%	25 12	16 1		
Total	204 92	45%	64 36	86 24		
Australia						
MUA	3 2	67%		1		
TCFUA	2	0%		1		
Total	5 2	40%		2		
Canada						
UFCW	3 1	33%	1	4		
UNITE	4 1	25%	2 1	2		
Total	7 2	29%	3 1	6		
UK						
TGWU	10 3	30%		3		
RMT	7 1	14%	2	5		
AEU	8	0%				
Total	17 4	24%				

IAM—International Association of Machinists; MUA—Maritime Union of Australia; RMT—National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers; TCFUA—Textile, Clothing, and Footwear Union of Australia; TGWU—Transport and General Workers Union; UAW—United Auto Workers; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UNITE—Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees; USWA—United Steelworkers of America; UTU—United Transportation Union

Miners rally in Washington for health care

Continued from front page

tags as the "Illinois UMWA Express." Some wore camouflage, which was commonly worn by miners during the 1989-90 Pittston coal strike.

Miners carried thousands of signs prepared by the union that said, "Keep the Promise! Save the Coal Act." Many carried homemade signs demanding the preservation of health care benefits. Other signs read "UMWA Freedom Fighters" and "Remember Pittston."

The UMWA Health and Retirement Fund was won in 1946 following a nationwide miners' strike. Through their mass mobilization the government agreed to back up the demand for lifetime health care for UMWA members. The commitment was codified in subsequent contracts between the UMWA and the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA). Over the past 25 years the coal bosses have been on an offensive to sharply cut back miners' health care. This was a central issue in the UMWA strikes in 1977-78 and 1989.

Today some 70,000 are covered under the retirees' health plan. Many are widows of retired miners. In recent years, many coal bosses have filed court suits attempting to end their responsibility to provide lifetime health coverage. Several recent court decisions have severely undermined the Coal Act. For example, a federal district court in Pennsylvania recently ruled that the

Berwind Corporation of Philadelphia, which had been paying \$295,000 in monthly premiums to more than 1,200 UMWA retirees, was now responsible for paying only five miners.

Bo Dodd is a retired miner from Eldridge, Alabama, who worked underground for 22 years. "We were promised health care from cradle to the grave," he said. "Well I'm not dead yet!" His friend Clint Tittle, remarked on the Coal Act, "Harry Truman signed it." Dodd replied, "But he didn't want to!"

The UMWA's main demand is that Congress pass the Coal Accountability and Retired Employee Act for the 21st Century or CARE 21. If passed the bill would immediately transfer \$172 million in Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund interest money to the UMWA's Combined Benefit Fund (CBF).

Another bill backed by the union, recently introduced into Congress, is the Coalminers and Widows Health Protection Act of 2000. The legislation would provide tens of thousands of retired miners or their widows health-care coverage for another decade.

'Affects every worker in the country'

Many working miners expressed their determination to back the fight to preserve medical coverage for retirees. Dennis Moore, a miner at Big Sky Coal in Coal Strip, Montana, explained, "If we lose the Coal Act, which we won't, it will affect the

medical care of every working man and woman in the country."

"People have to be willing to take a stand and say we aren't going to be pushed around anymore," said Alabama miner Joe Craig Weldon. "We want the coal bosses and the government to live up to their promises to us. People fought and died for union wages and benefits," he emphasized.

Derrick Webster, another Alabama miner, added, "I am here to support my Dad even though I don't know the rest of these people from Adam. It upsets me that these older miners have no place else to go [for medical care]. I am here in D.C. to get these people what they need."

Among the rally participants were many widows of coal miners who depend on the medical benefits provided to them under the Coal Act.

V. Doss, from Brilliant, Alabama, explained her husband worked in the mines for 26 years. First, said Doss, her husband was disabled with a crushed hip in a mining accident, and later died from black lung. Adding insult to injury, the mine operator refused to send in his Social Security paperwork. So she never got her husband's miners' pension. Doss said that maintaining these benefits is essential to her continuing to be able to live, echoing a common sentiment by many at the rally.

The *Birmingham News* carried an article the day of the protest that began: "Tensions

in Alabama's coalfields rose even higher Tuesday, as miners at one big mine walked off the job to join retired miners at a health-care rally in Washington, D.C."

Reporting that 1,200 miners, retirees, and family members "left the state in a bus caravan," the paper said the "exodus will idle at least one Alabama operation—U.S. Steel Mining's Oak Grove mine—for three days beginning Tuesday." Citing a company official who was "concerned about the timing of this," the *News* complained that the miners "refused to apologize for leaving their mines even though the operators can little afford the lost production."

"Health care for retirees and spouses is the most important issue to this union," said Rex Tanner, local president of the Oak Grove mine. "We tried to explain that to U.S. Steel."

Young people join rally

Several busloads of high school age youth whose family members work in the mines were among the rally participants.

The largest group of youth was from Castlewood, Virginia. Another couple of buses brought youth from Carmichael, Pennsylvania. Two buses came from Hart High in Lincoln, West Virginia. A student from Logan, West Virginia, said, "All our families are coal miners, my dad got laid off, my grandpa got killed in a coal mine."

Robby Beddow, also from Logan, said, "Everyone should have health care. We have two hospitals now, but they are shutting one down." Beddow said three busloads of students came from his high school.

Speakers at the rally, chaired by UMWA president Cecil Roberts, included UMWA vice president Jerry Jones, former UMWA president Richard Trumka—now secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO—and several Democratic and Republican politicians from coal-producing states. These included Senators Arlen Specter from Pennsylvania, Mike DeWine from Ohio, Charles Robb from Virginia, and Robert Byrd from West Virginia.

UMWA president Roberts read a letter to the crowd from a miner's widow whose health and age prevented her from attending the rally, but who asked to be counted as present. When Roberts moved to "count her as present," the crowd cheered in agreement.

Participants in the action included members of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union, the Seafarers International Union, the United Steelworkers of America, the United Transportation Union and the Laborers' International Union.

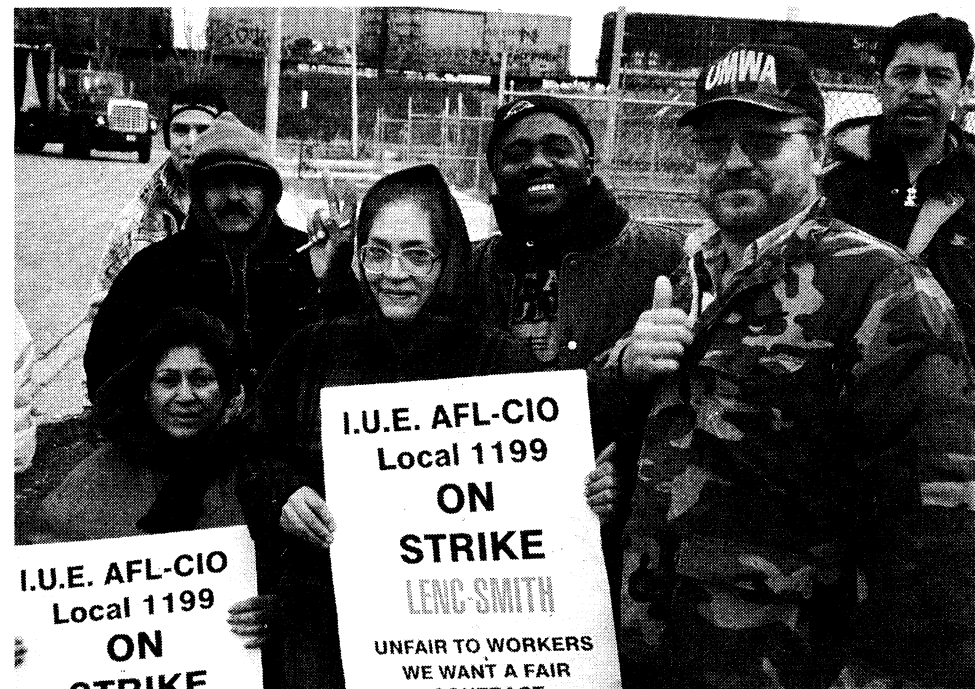
Mary Martin is a member of the International Association of Machinists.

Coal miners in central Illinois beat back move to fire UMWA militant

BY JOEL WILLIAMS

CHICAGO—Coal miners at Freeman United's Crown II and sister mines in central and western Illinois are savoring a vic-

tory over general manager Archie Parker, who according to miners had trumped up charges against Dave Yard, a member of United Mine Workers of America Local 1969.



David Yard (right) joins picket line of striking International Union of Electrical Workers at Lenc-Smith in Cicero, Illinois, December 1998. Yard was a strike captain for UMWA Local 1969, on strike against Freeman United Coal Company at the time.

Miners strike in New Mexico

BY JEFF POWERS AND EFL LUCERO

TSE BONITO, New Mexico—"No contract! No work!" was the chant of 150 miners from United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1322 as they struck the McKinley mine at 12:01 a.m. May 15.

The mine, owned by Pittsburg and Midway Coal (P&M), employs 300 miners and is located on the Navajo reservation. Some 95 percent of those who work here are Navajo.

"The company had a predisposition to strike," UMWA Local 1322 president Lawrence Oliver said in an interview. Pittsburg and Midway is demanding the miners give up double-time pay for work on Sundays and triple-time pay for holidays and birthdays. P&M demands that workers get no overtime pay at all unless they work more than 40 hours in a week.

Another big issue is health care. The miners are now covered at 100 percent of all health-care costs. The company wants to take that away from Native American min-

ers. P&M offers to pay them \$100 a month if they agree to go to Indian Health Services, a supposedly free service provided by the federal government.

Meanwhile, the UMWA declared a "memorial day" for May 15 at the York Canyon mine in Raton, New Mexico, and the North River mine near Birmingham, Alabama, both owned by Pittsburg and Midway. Miners there did not go to work that day in solidarity with Local 1322. According to their contracts, UMWA members have a certain number of memorial days the union can call that give miners a day off.

The contract at the Kemmerer mine in Wyoming, the other P&M holding, expires May 26.

This is the first strike for those miners who have been hired over the past three years. Most of the workers are veterans of the strikes in 1987 and 1995. Many of the miners *Militant* reporters talked with thought this could be a long walkout, but everyone expressed determination to stay out as long as it takes to win the fight.

Yard was suspended May 12 "with intent to discharge" for "violation of work rule number 7," specifically for allegedly "intentionally turning off a circuit breaker to interrupt and stop the production of coal." The electrical failure resulted in a 12-minute shutdown of the beltline that carries coal out of the mine to a preparation plant. Yard had been in the area carrying out responsibilities as a mine examiner.

Crown II miners organized an emergency discussion in the park in Farmersville, Illinois, on Mothers Day morning, May 14, that drew some 60 miners. Miners from Freeman United's Crown III mine just outside Farmersville and from the company's strip mine near the town of Industry participated along with some miners' wives and a few other workers.

One miner from Industry said he had heard about the move to fire Yard when he went to work that day, took the day off, and drove more than 100 miles to join the discussion on how to defend this UMWA militant.

Kirby Williams and other miners who spoke hit the potential firing of Yard as an attack on the union as a whole. Miners explained how the electrical system at Crown II was prone to problems, any one of which could have caused the breaker in question to interrupt the flow of electricity. Miners agreed to get the word out and to wear hats with Yard's name written in big white letters on their hard hats while at work.

Crown II and III miners conducted roadside meetings on Mothers Day evening with all those going in for the midnight shift at the Crown III mine. Many expressed anger and a strong desire to strike to prevent Yard's firing.

So unanimous was the miners' outrage over this frame-up move by Parker that Freeman United bosses backed down. Miners report that the move to fire Yard has been abandoned and the letter charging Yard has been rescinded. As an alternative to proceeding with the discharge of Yard and the union taking its chances with an arbitrator, the company reportedly offered, and Yard and his representatives from Local 1969 and UMWA District 12 accepted, a seven-day suspension without pay. Yard admitted to no responsibility whatever for the shutdown and nothing is to appear on his record concerning this matter.

Crown II miners are collecting donations on all shifts to compensate for Yard's loss of pay. One miner said that although Yard and his family and fellow workers were "put through hell over this, our victory includes seven days *excused*, with 'solidarity' pay."

from Pathfinder

Coal Miners on Strike

Articles on the 11-day 1977-78 strike, the 1981 strike and contract rejection vote, the United Mine Workers of America and the fight against nuclear power, the fight for health benefits and compensation to Black Lung victims, and more. \$5.00

Coal Miners ON STRIKE



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Ecuador: new wave of labor, farm protests

Continued from front page
conditions demanded by the International Monetary Fund for a "standby" loan agreement signed by the Ecuadorian government. The National Teachers Union (UNE) went on strike May 15 to demand a minimum monthly wage of US\$100, in order to keep up with inflation, and to reject an education bill now before Congress that would undercut public education. Tens of thousands of public employees and hospital workers also launched strikes against the government's economic policies.

The centerpiece of the government's economic plan is what is known as dollarization—replacing the sucre with the U.S. dollar as the official currency, at a fixed exchange rate of 25,000 sucres to the dollar.

The consequences of dollarization are contributing to the devastation of the livelihoods of the vast majority of the people in this Andean country. Prices for many essentials, from food staples to public transportation, have skyrocketed as the government cuts subsidies. Starting next month, gasoline prices are expected to shoot up.

Two presidents in Ecuador were brought down in the last three years, each time when working people took to the streets to reject drastic austerity measures decreed by the government to resolve the economic crisis to the benefit of imperialist investors and domestic capitalists.

In 1997 Abdalá Bucaram was removed from power by Congress after 2 million people mobilized in the streets.

On January 21 of this year, President Jamil Mahuad was ousted during a popular rebellion led by indigenous organizations, which over the past several years have commanded increasing authority among working people in the countryside—and now more and more in the cities. Mahuad's efforts to impose the dollarization policy sparked the uprising.

The revolt led to a short-lived governing triumvirate made of Antonio Vargas, president of the Indian organization CONAIE; an army colonel; and a former supreme court president. The military then maneuvered to hand the government over to Vice President Gustavo Noboa, now the president. The new regime is now prosecuting the lower-echelon army officers who took part in the rebellion.

"Since January 21, however, the current government has not changed the economic policies. It has continued with dollarization and taken no action against government corruption," said indigenous leader Blanca Chancoso in an April 27 interview in Quito.

"We have been open to dialog with the government, but it has not responded to our

Ninety percent of the loan money goes toward rescuing the banks, and the other 10 percent amounts to charity measures, instead of funding real development programs that are needed."

"Since the IMF's loan, the foreign debt has increased. Today, 54 percent of Ecuador's national budget is used to pay on the foreign debt. The debt should be canceled."

As a result, antigovernment protests did not take long to resume. On May 1, the international working-class holiday, more than 50,000 people marched in Quito voicing their opposition to dollarization, the sell-off of state-owned companies, and the U.S. military base in the coastal city of Manta.

High school and college students, who played a visible role in the January 21 uprising, have not stopped protesting near the Central University campus against the hike in bus fares.

"Students had begun to mobilize in 1996 under the government of Abdalá Bucaram, after a period of retreat," said Jorge Luis Reinoso, 22, president of the University Student Federation in Quito. "In 1997 the movement grew, and it was from this Central University that up to 25,000 students mobilized to declare that things were not going well. The austerity measures imposed by the [Bucaram] government were the last drop—that's when the students regained confidence and we realized, as students, that protests, struggle, and mobilizations give us results."

"If the government continues with its economic measures, it could unleash civil disobedience that could start before July, said Chancoso. The regime is set to lift subsidies and jack up prices in July. "This attitude will force an uprising, a mobilization throughout the country if there is no response to our demands. Its term will be over."

The Noboa government has responded with typical ruling-class contempt for the Indian population, an estimated 40 percent of Ecuador's 12.4 million people. "They want power? Participate in the election campaigns like everybody else in Ecuador—there is no preference or privilege for any Ecuadorian," Noboa told *El Comercio* in a May 12 interview. He called CONAIE leaders "rude" for standing up to the government's demands.

Chancoso pointed out the realities of Ecuador's "democracy." "We are almost half the population," she said, "but in Congress we only represent 3 percent. Of 120 congressional deputies, there are four who are Indians."

CONAIE vice president Ricardo Ulcuango, speaking to international report-



Photos: Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Part of contingent of Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) at May Day march in Quito. Left: Blanca Chancoso, leader of CONAIE. Indigenous organizations command increasing authority among working people in city and countryside.



these bodies. While some CONAIE leaders emphasize that the purpose of these formations is not "the traditional form of power," they have been vehicles for political debate and have encouraged the process of political organization and mobilization against the government's anti-working-class and anti-peasant policies.

During the January 21 uprising, a body made up of representatives of Indian groups, unions, and other mass organizations briefly took power in Guayaquil, the country's largest city.

Fight against U.S. military base

Indian organizations are also fighting for the removal of the U.S. air base in Manta, established last year under an agreement signed by the U.S. and Ecuadorian governments. It was established as a supposed cen-

ter for Washington's "war on drugs." This base is now being expanded. It will receive seven U.S. warships over the next month as part of beefing up Washington's military presence under the cover of fighting drug trafficking and "illegal immigration." A floating dock may also be built for these U.S. military operations.

Asked about U.S. military moves in Ecuador, CONAIE leader Chancoso replied, "There is a real militarization of the Amazon region. In the indigenous communities in the provinces of Sucumbios and Orellana, on the border with Colombia, the 5,000 U.S. military personnel already there carry out joint exercises with the Ecuadorian army."

The CONAIE leader told reporters that the May Day march was a prelude to future demonstrations and protests. Answering the government's propaganda against the "radicalized Indians," she stated, "We don't create chaos, as they claim. It's the government that forces working people to protest."

Freddy Congo, a youth leader of the National Federation of Peasant, Indian, and Black Organizations (FENOCIN) and a Black farmer who grows tomatoes in the northern province of Carchi, said his groups expects a national strike. After the May 21 elections a new round of mobilizations will be launched, he reported.



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

May Day in Quito: hospital workers demand more health funding. Some 200,000 health-care workers, teachers, and other public employees are now on strike in Ecuador.

three points. These are: freeing the colonels and other detained military officers and dropping charges against them; showing a willingness to combat corruption; and withdrawal of the dollarization measures and unfreezing people's bank accounts."

Chancoso, like Vargas, is a leader of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE).

"The new government has taken even more drastic economic measures against the people, said Chancoso. "It raised bus fares by 100 percent. It has instituted a court-martial against the colonels [who joined the revolt]. And it signed the standby loan agreement with the IMF, which worsens the economic and political crisis in the country.

ers May 12, stated, "We do not want to take power—at least for now—but we are struggling to end corruption." He said Indian organizations were participating in the May 21 state and municipal elections.

In 1995, after a series of mass meetings and debates, indigenous groups decided to take part in election campaigns through a political organization called Pachakutik, a Quichua word meaning "To come back to the world."

Over the past several years, Indian organizations have initiated bodies known today as *Parlamentos del Pueblo*, or People's Parliaments, made up of a broad of mass organizations in cities and the countryside. Traditional bourgeois parties are excluded from

Candidates take aim at Social Security

BY GREG MCCARTAN

Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush opened an attack on the working class this week, proposing that individuals be allowed to invest a portion of their Social Security payroll taxes in the stock market or a private money management firm.

Vice president Albert Gore, Democratic candidate for president, denounced the announcement, saying it put individuals' pensions at risk.

Both candidates raise the specter of the government-financed pension system going broke and argue that a radical shift is needed. They portray Social Security solely as a retirement plan, rather than a cradle-to-grave plan to provide a minimum security to working people. This would include pensions, disability benefits, coverage for spouses and dependents if disabled or in case of death, and Medicare coverage in case of retirement or disability.

Gore advocates using the current Social Security surplus to pay down the national government debt, then using interest saved to keep the system solvent.

In making his announcement Bush made it clear this was just a beginning. He said he wants to change Social Security to "a system where personal savings accounts are the predominant part of the investment vehicle. And so, this is a step toward a completely different world and an important step."

Playing on fears of younger workers and middle-class layers, and attempting to pit them against an older generation, Bush claimed the Social Security system will face bankruptcy as the "baby boom" generation

begins to retire. Younger workers face a "lifetime of paying taxes for benefits they may never receive," he said.

The Republican candidate said the stock markets have proved to be "the best and safest way to build personal wealth." He also broached the idea of shifting away from Medicare to a range of private health insurance plans.

The debate on Social Security has also been prominent in the Democratic primary for U.S. Senate in New Jersey. There, multimillionaire Jon Corzine, a former chairman of Goldman, Sachs & Company, advocates the government invest part of the Social Security Trust Fund in the stock market. U.S. president William Clinton floated this proposal earlier in his administration. Former New Jersey governor James Florio, the other Democratic senatorial candidate, said the scheme was a risky one that threatened to send elderly people "to the poorhouse."

Social Security was a concession by the employers and their government in Washington to the rising industrial union movement in the United States.

It encompassed the first federally guaranteed universal unemployment benefits and the first guaranteed disability compensation, as well as Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

Subsequent social struggles, such as the battle for Black rights in the 1950s and '60s, forced extension of Social Security to include health benefits such as Medicare for the elderly and Medicaid for workers with very low incomes.

Protesters say: 'Send boy home, normalize relations with Cuba'

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

NEW YORK—Picket lines held around the country May 11 called for the return of Elián González to Cuba and demanded that Washington normalize relations with Havana. The actions took place the same day as the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments over an application for political asylum for the six-year-old Cuban boy, filed by relatives in Miami.

"Let Juan Miguel, Elián and family go home!" stated the leaflet used to publicize the picket in New York, which drew 100 people to Union Square in Manhattan. The sponsoring coalition, the National Committee for the Return of Elián to his Father in Cuba, demanded "Lift the U.S. blockade and travel ban on Cuba," and "No more Eliáns, repeal the Cuban Adjustment Act." The anti-Cuba measure encourages perilous immigration from Cuba to the United States outside legal channels by granting those who touch U.S. shores a fast track to residency rights. At the same time the U.S. government places strict limits on legal immigration from Cuba into this country.

The demonstrators in New York picketed, chanted, and listened to speeches by representatives of numerous organizations, including Casa de las Americas. A local Spanish-language TV channel carried reports of the protests.

Forty people joined a picket line in San Francisco to call for the immediate return of the boy and his family to Cuba. "Now is the time to stand by the Cuban Revolution," Sierra Madrid of the Venceremos Brigade told participants. She attacked the U.S. government's long-standing ban on travel to Cuba.

At the federal courthouse in Birmingham, Alabama, 15 people picketed during the afternoon rush hour. One of the pickets, Susan LaMont, told the press, "We are here to demand the asylum proceedings be stopped. The U.S. government has no authority in this case. The boy should be returned to his family in Cuba immediately. We are calling for repeal of the Cuban Adjustment Act, which encourages people like Elián's mother to take rickety boats across the Florida Straits; and to end the trade embargo against Cuba."

More than a dozen people protested out-

side the federal courthouse in downtown Philadelphia in an action called by the Philadelphia Cuba Coalition. Among those demonstrating were two students from Bryn Mawr college who heard about the demonstration by an Internet posting at their school. A number of cars passing by honked their horns in support of the picket after reading the large signs protesters held highlighting the demands of the demonstration. The picket attracted a number of area media, including two TV stations, as well as the local Temple University-based National Public Radio affiliate.

The Atlanta Network on Cuba held an action May 10 outside venue for the asylum hearing. In Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and elsewhere, supporters of Cuban sovereignty also organized pickets.

The protests responded to the fact that Elián González remains in the United States more than five months after being picked up from the waters off the Florida Coast, having survived a journey from Cuba in which his mother and 10 others drowned.

At present the boy, along with his father, Juan Miguel González, and other family members and friends, is staying at a U.S. government retreat in Maryland. The judges hearing the asylum case have barred the boy from leaving the country until they rule.

Juan Miguel and Elián González were taken to Maryland after the April 22 seizure of the boy by agents of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Around 130 INS cops and 20 U.S. marshals, many of them heavily armed, burst into the Miami house of Lázaro González in the predawn hours. INS officials had delivered Elián to the household last November.

"We have promised that we will give this case expedited treatment," said Circuit Judge J.L. Edmondson, the senior figure on the three-judge panel that presides over the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals. The court stands one step below the U.S. Supreme Court. "My guess is that we will be able to render a decision in this case in a few weeks, rather than a few months," he said. In the first day's proceedings Edmondson twice referred to Cuba as a "communist, totalitarian state."

In Cuba, a rally of 50,000 people May 13 on the Isle of Youth backed up the call for the immediate return of Juan Miguel and



Tony Savino

May 11 protest in Miami opposed Washington's hostile policy toward Cuba

Elián González. The occasion was a celebration of the 45th anniversary of the release of Fidel Castro from a notorious prison used by the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. The revolutionary government formed after Batista's overthrow in 1959 turned the prison into a school. "Our legacy for the present and future generations is...we are and will continue to be in a state of combat," Pedro Miret, vice president of Cuba's Council of Ministers, told the crowd.

Miami pickets: 'End the U.S. embargo against Cuba now!'

BY ROLLANDE GIRARD

MIAMI—"Send Elián home! End the embargo now!" chanted 30 people picketing across from the Immigration and Naturalization Service building here May 11. The protest had been called three days earlier by the Miami Coalition to End the U.S. Embargo of Cuba.

Many motorists driving by the busy intersection honked in support. A minority reacted angrily. One called out, "Go back

to Cuba" after hearing chants of "Cuba sí, bloqueo no!" (Cuba yes, blockade no!)

Nearly half the protesters were Cubans living in Miami, including members of the Alliance of Workers in the Cuban Community and the Antonio Maceo Brigade.

A couple of passersby joined the action. They included a Guatemalan worker shopping at a nearby mall. "I totally agree with what you say," she stated, after seeing signs demanding the U.S. government normalize diplomatic relations with Cuba and repeal the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act.

Most local TV channels and major papers had reporters on the scene. Three television stations gave brief coverage to the protest during that evening's news broadcasts, along with another action by several dozen people outside the INS building earlier that day demanding that Elián González stay in the United States.

Rollande Girard is a sewing machine operator in Miami. Kristin Meriam, a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 12014 in Birmingham, and Jim Altenberg in San Francisco contributed to this article.

INS assault sparks wide-ranging debates in Miami

BY ROLLANDE GIRARD

MIAMI—The Clinton administration's commando-style assault on the home of Lázaro González in this city continues to stir sharp debate and political polarization here, as well as fueling the crisis in the Miami government.

González is the great-uncle of six-year-old Cuban child Elián González, who was found at sea last November and, instead of being returned to Cuba, was turned over by U.S. authorities to distant relatives here. Underlying this dispute is the U.S. rulers' hostility toward the Cuban revolution and their refusal to establish normal diplomatic relations with Havana. These events, created by Washington, culminated with the April 22 raid in which the child was seized by heavily armed Immigration and Naturalization Service cops under the orders of U.S. attorney general Janet Reno.

The majority in U.S. ruling circles has supported the Clinton administration's assault in Miami, including the strengthening of executive power and the attacks on democratic rights that it represents, as well as the fostering of anti-Cuban prejudice to achieve these goals.

A few thousand people demonstrated in South Dade County May 6 in support of the U.S. government's police raid on the González home. The protesters lined the side of U.S. Route 1 as a caravan of cars and pickup trucks led by tractors drove by, many with Confederate flags. A number of the participants were Black. The rally was held

near a Black community.

The demonstrators held signs reading "Fly the American flag here, fly the communist Cuban flag in Cuba," "Free inner-tube ride back to Cuba," and "Why don't they burn Castro's flag?" They were referring to the fact that some Cuban-American protesters burned the U.S. flag at the previous week's protest against the INS raid.

Other signs that reflected the rightist character of the demonstration declared, "One country, one flag, one language," "It's better to die fighting for your country than to die floating from your country," and "Thank you, Janet Reno, God Bless the INS."

Anti-Carollo, pro-Reno action

Fifteen miles north on the same road, a group called Citizens for a Better Miami organized a rally of about 200 people. Organizers said they were for cultural diversity and free speech. At this protest, the Confederate flag was not welcomed. But one of the protesters, Maurice, told this reporter that he had Confederate flags in his car and that many of his T-shirts depicted a Confederate flag.

Many Cuban-Americans who wanted the Cuban child to stay in Miami and who support Miami mayor Joseph Carollo didn't agree with this protest and expressed open hostility from their cars.

Not everyone at this second demonstration was there for the same reasons. The main chant was "USA, USA" and one sign read, "Hitler + Castro = Carollo." Another

large yellow banner read, "Miami, a Banana Republic."

But others carried signs supporting an end to the U.S. embargo of Cuba. Many of the demonstrators were Cuban-Americans who support normalizing diplomatic relations with Cuba. Francisco Aruca, a well-known radio commentator and businessman, urged his listeners to participate in the protest. Aruca opposes the U.S. embargo of Cuba as an opponent of the Cuban revolution.

Supporters of the Cuban revolution who attended the action expressed the view that the people present could help get rid of Carollo and Cuban-American right-wingers in the local government. Their argument was, "When the government does something right, you have to let them know," referring to the INS operation to seize the child.

Alfredo Neuman, a Colombian who came to check out the rally, said, "I had mixed feelings coming here. On one hand, I wanted to demonstrate my happiness that Elián is with his father, but when I arrived here I felt that I was cheering what is happening in Vieques too," referring to the eviction of anti-Navy protesters on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques by U.S. cops and marines just a few days after the raid in Miami.

The U.S. Marine flag was flying along with the U.S. flag on a pole in the middle of the protest.

Several other signs read, "Janet, we love you and respect you," "End the Cuban Adjustment Act," and "Immigration control."

Another protest took place on May 7 sup-

porting ex-police chief William O'Brien and former city manager Donald Warshaw, for their participation in the INS raid and their opposition to Carollo.

The Miami mayor fired Warshaw for refusing to fire police chief O'Brien when he refused to inform the mayor ahead of time about the INS raid. O'Brien then resigned, and the fired city manager appointed Raúl Martínez, a police officer who is Cuban-American, to replace him.

Crisis in city administration

Carollo then designated a new city manager, Carlos Giménez, also Cuban-American. A circuit court lifted a restraining order May 9, allowing Carollo to fire Warshaw. Giménez praised the new chief of police.

These recent moves have only isolated Carollo's administration more.

The Socialist Workers candidate for County Commission, Rachele Fruit, expressed the view in discussions with opponents of the U.S. embargo of Cuba that it did not advance that fight to participate in these reactionary protests.

"Rather than praising William Clinton and Janet Reno for Elián González's return to his father," Fruit said, "we must denounce them for their refusal to return the child to Cuba from the beginning. It's the tenacity of the Cuban people that is responsible for the fact that his return to Cuba is approaching."

Rollande Girard is a sewing machine operator in Miami.

S. African workers hold one-day general strike against layoffs

BY CAROLINE BENGU
AND T.J. FIGUEROA

PRETORIA, South Africa—Hundreds of thousands of workers took to the streets of major cities and mining and industrial towns May 10, shutting down half of South Africa's economy in a 24-hour general strike to protest job losses called by the country's largest union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

"*Tina silwela amalungelo wethu*" ("We are fighting for our rights" in Zulu) sang more than 10,000 marchers, overwhelmingly African—many of them women, and many of them young—as they toyi-toyed through this capital city. Sections of the disciplined assembly chanted "*Ons is gatvol*," which loosely translated from Afrikaans means "We are fed up!"

The mood was militant and upbeat as metalworkers, miners, teachers, government employees, food industry workers and others, often with biting humor, expressed determination to find ways to confront growing joblessness. COSATU officials estimate that about half a million jobs have been eliminated since 1994. Official unemployment is now put at about 40 percent.

Leaders of COSATU, whose member unions organize 1.8 million workers, estimated that close to 4 million people joined the protest strike. Large and medium-sized businesses were the most affected. Manufacturing was hardest hit, as 60 percent of workers struck. About half the mines were shut down. Many government offices had only skeleton staffs, and the public schools were empty.

Johannesburg—where COSATU said 150,000 marched, while police put the number at 50,000—was a sea of union T-shirts and banners. Tens of thousands marched in Cape Town. Thousands more took to the streets of East London, Port Elizabeth, Umtata, Nelspruit, Middelburg, Rustenburg, Phalaborwa, Carletonville, Pietersburg, Kimberley, Mafeking, and other towns.

Capitalist economic crisis

South Africa's economy is the biggest in sub-Saharan Africa. This is a result of the brutal superexploitation of millions of black workers under the former apartheid system, whose rulers stole Africans' land and cattle and deprived them of all citizenship and basic democratic rights. In addition, South African finance capital siphoned wealth from workers' labor and natural resources in the region, where it has large investments.

The racist state of the white minority was brought to its knees by the struggles of millions of workers, peasants, and revolutionary-minded democrats, led by the African National Congress, in an accelerated way following the 1976 youth rebellion in Soweto. Workers struggles mushroomed in the early 1980s, leading to the formation of COSATU in formal alliance with the ANC and the South African Communist Party. The class battles that mortally wounded apartheid in the early 1990s opened broad democratic space for discussion and action that capitalists have not been able to close down.

Today South Africa faces the effects of world capitalism's economic crisis. The huge mining houses confront low prices for minerals such as gold. Competition with capitalists abroad has accelerated since the 1994 democratic elections, as other governments have dropped their antiapartheid economic sanctions.

The unequal relations of trade imposed by major imperialist powers—Washington, London, Berlin, Paris, and Tokyo, among others—mean many bosses are not interested in investing in production, and this "emerging market" shudders whenever there is turmoil on world stock and bond exchanges. Since the beginning of this year alone the currency, the rand, has lost 15 percent of its value against the dollar.

Apartheid's warped legacy persists in the countryside, where the great majority of peasants live in extreme poverty and are unable to draw wealth from the land, more than

80 percent of which remains in white hands. As a result, the income of many workers must feed 10 people each.

COSATU demands

This is the context for the main demands put forward by COSATU officials as part of the jobs campaign that culminated in the May 10 strike. The demands are: amend legislation to make layoffs a subject of negotiation between unions and bosses, and to protect workers when companies are liquidated; all privatizations of state-run entities and government layoffs to be subject to negotiation; and slow the pace of import tariff reductions to protect local industries.

COSATU officials elaborated on these demands during the May 10 marches. While many Pretoria protesters expressed support for these demands in interviews, they also went beyond them, indicating that working people are trying to find ways to put their stamp on the direction of politics here.

"I am here to raise the plight of some of our brothers and sisters who are being retrenched [laid off]," said Wilhemina Matabane from Mabopane, who works at the Noordelike Beton Produkte construction company in Pretoria and is a member of the Construction and Allied Workers Union.

"At the plant we are fighting to keep our jobs, and for equal pay for equal work. There are 19 men and one woman there, and workers have elected me as shop steward," she said.

Thembele Khumalo from Klerksdorp, a member of the Communications Workers Union at the telephone utility Telkom, said the march would "raise our voice against retrenchments. The government has promised transformation and job creation since 1994. Our experience has been joblessness, and this I believe is caused by the Labor Relations Act, which makes retrenchments an item for consultation and not negotiations."

Telkom, 70 percent owned by the government and 30 percent by companies based in the United States and Malaysia, has laid off close to 10,000 workers in the past year as part of its "downsizing" plan, he said.

"There are lots of reasons why I am participating in the march today," said Peter Sedibane, a diamond miner for 22 years at the De Beers Cullinan mine, where he is a member of the National Union of Mineworkers. "In the mines jobs are being lost and there is increased contract [temporary] labor. There is a lot of work but bosses don't want to hire more people. I take home R1,500 [US\$215] a month. There is no upward mobility and the bosses do not recognize the experience I have. We have been marching several times and I am not sure if our demands are being addressed."

Immigrant workers

Outside the trade and industry department, where a memorandum outlining union demands was presented to a government representative, a COSATU official led marchers in a chant against products imported from China. Many workers support the view advanced by union officials that imports are part of the problem.

"Buy South African products," said Gladys McDoolley, a worker at a Pick 'n Pay grocery store and member of the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union. "There are lots of foreigners in our country. They do nothing for us and take our jobs." McDoolley also said she and her co-workers were fighting racist treatment from the store's bosses, most of whom are white.

"We mustn't blame immigrants," said Gertrude Tshimang from Soshanguve, a machine operator at state-run arms manufacturer Denel and a member of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa. "They are also people. If you shut them out, and problems come to South Africa, who's going to help us? Where are we going to run to? We must think of each other."

Tshimang proudly noted that "98 percent of us [Denel workers] are here today. We



Militant T.J. Figueroa

In major cities and industrial areas, hundreds of thousands took part in May 10 general strike and protests against layoffs. Above: strikers in Pretoria.

came in large numbers and Denel is shut down. By our being in the streets we are making a victory for ourselves. Marching is the only way the government is going to hear us. We need job creation. And we need action on AIDS, which is killing our people—and we really mean it. The government must hear it. This is our only weapon."

"We blame big business for job losses and retrenchments," said Maurice Makatu, a member of the Transport and General Workers Union and bus company clerk from Mabopane. In response to the chorus of criticism of the strike from the press, the employers, and the government that workers' actions would scare off investment, he said: "No, no, no. That is not the way. Business is scarifying away investment. They are taking their businesses outside the country. We are doing our part today. The government and businesses have to see that jobs are created."

Like many other workers, Makatu said, "The ANC government has done a tremendous job. You must remember that our democracy is still a baby. The ANC has come with changes that benefited most workers and the community at large. And people have benefited from COSATU's actions, even unorganized workers." On the question of immigrant workers, he emphasized, "We don't have to blame people from outside the country for joblessness. We blame the bosses here."

Government officials criticize walkout

The strike drew criticism from some ANC government officials. Finance Minister Trevor Manuel opposed the unions' efforts. "Workers can go on a general strike against the government day after day and you're not going to create jobs," he said.

Days before the walkout, the government's chief spokesperson, Joel Netshitenzhe, was quoted in the *Sunday Independent* calling workers' actions an "unnecessary sideshow" in a bigger battle to transform the economy.

It was Education Minister Kader Asmal,

in particular, who provoked strikers' anger. "If COSATU will not exempt teachers from taking part in strikes, then we appeal to teachers" not to participate, he said. "This appeal is made in the context of poor school and learner performance."

The minister also made a big show of his threat that teachers who did not show up for work would be docked a day's pay.

In a clear response to Asmal's threats, members of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) shut down the public school system.

A teacher from Ekangala, who asked not to be named, said, "Asmal should come down to the people. We put him there!"

The ANC outside of government, however, endorsed the strike. "We as the ANC want to commend you for having taken to the streets to highlight retrenchments, unemployment, and poverty," the party's secretary general, Kgalema Motlanthe, told 40,000 workers at a May Day rally in Johannesburg. "No trade union movement, no revolutionary movement can hope to achieve its objectives in the board room, but only through mass mobilization."

He remarked, "If we postpone our struggle, in 20 years we will find ourselves in the position of ZANU-PF," Zimbabwe's ruling party. The leadership of that party, which led the struggle to overturn white minority rule in that country, has been carrying out pro-capitalist policies that go against the aspirations of working people there for advances in income, living conditions, and rights.

Kevin Wakeford, head of the South African Chamber of Business, which bemoaned the strike, rushed to reassure his class brethren abroad. "Today's strike is certainly not a typical day in the economic life of South Africa, and we trust that international markets will interpret it as such," he said.

COSATU president Willie Madisha warned that the strike did not mark the end of the federation's jobs campaign. He said employers had six days to respond or face more protests.

Pentagon admits military hits in Kosova bombing were inflated

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

One year ago Washington bombarded Yugoslavia for 78 days, carrying out 38,000 sorties. At the time the Pentagon claimed its high-tech precision-guided weapons inflicted massive damage to military targets. NATO officials claimed 110 Serb tanks were destroyed, along with 153 armored personnel carriers.

Pretending to protect Kosovars under attack by the chauvinist regime in Belgrade, the U.S. rulers' real aim was to deal a blow to the workers state in Yugoslavia and edge out their imperialist rivals.

The U.S. military brass now admits its figures were greatly exaggerated. When NATO troops entered Kosova, they discovered the U.S.-led force had actually destroyed 14 tanks, and found only 12 self-propelled artillery pieces and 12 wrecked armored personnel carriers.

Writing about these admissions in a May 12 column in the New York *Daily News*, Lars-Erik Nelson labeled this finding a "scandal," pointing out that "the entire military establishment pretended that high-tech,

highly expensive, precision-guided, 21st-century weapons had brought Serbia to its knees."

Nelson commented, "In fact the really crippling damage to Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's little tyranny—the old-fashioned destruction of civilian power plants and bridges—could have been performed by World War-era B-17 bombers."

The real target of this assault was the working people of Yugoslavia and the infrastructure of the country. Military analyst Chuck Spinney admitted as much. "We knew how to do that kind of bombing in the '30s," he stated. "This was a World War II-type bombing though more accurate. We were bombing Yugo plants, wineries, anything to raise the pain of the people. Our military was incapable of dealing with the Serbian military, so it attacked the civilian structure."

Frederick Forsyth, writing in the May 15 *Wall Street Journal*, reported that U.S.-led forces "managed to kill 14 times more Serb civilians than uniformed soldiers" and other troops.

400 protest racist attack in N. Carolina town

BY LAUREN HART

HUNTERSVILLE, North Carolina—About 400 people rallied here May 14 to protest a racist attack on a Black family in this suburb just north of Charlotte.

Sometime after 11:00 p.m. on May 10, someone set fire to a car parked in the driveway of Steven and Jaelynn Sealey. Jaelynn Sealey said she was alerted by her dog barking and had gone downstairs to investigate. She had just gone out the back door when the car blew up. She ran back in the house and got her two children out while calling for help.

"It's lucky she wasn't injured in the explosion," said Steven Sealey, who was working at the time of the attack. "These people tried to kill me and my family, and destroy my property—there's no doubt."

After firemen put out the blaze, a neighbor noticed someone had painted "Go Home N—" on the door of the Sealeys' garage. Furniture on the back porch had been stacked in a corner and doused with gasoline.

The Sealey family had moved to the predominantly white, middle-class neighborhood about a year ago. Jaelynn Sealey described the outpouring of visits they got from supportive neighbors in the days following the assault, including some who power-washed the racist slur off their garage.

The Sunday evening rally, called by neighbors and announced the day before in the Charlotte paper, was mostly attended by residents of the neighborhood. A representative of the NAACP, the Sealeys, and local pastors spoke, as did the Huntersville mayor and the police chief.

Jeff Davis said he was a friend of the Sealeys who came because he "wanted to show support." Nothing like this had happened before in the area that he knew of. Kathleen Besson came with her children. "I thought it would be good for them to see most white people aren't that cruel," she said.

Derek Brown was one of a number of

demonstrators who came from the University Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, which the Sealeys attend. "It's difficult to fathom that something like this is still happening," said Brown, who is Black. "Anyone who decides to live in a community shouldn't have to consider whether the color of their skin could be a problem."

A couple of residents speculated that the

incident was precipitated by a recent debate in a community newsletter over the Confederate flag, though others disagreed. The editor of the newsletter had called for embracing the flag, which prompted a flurry of responses.

No one has yet been arrested in connection with the attack. Police say their investigation is continuing.

More Pathfinder titles off presses

BY PETER THIERJUNG

NEW YORK—Pathfinder's print shop delivered nine titles by the end of April, three titles short of projected deliveries for the month. The shop is organizing to deliver 15 titles in May.

New International No. 4, which has long been out of print, is scheduled for delivery May 17.

The volume contains "The Fight for a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States" by Jack Barnes and is a timely addition to the list of *New Internationals* available for the spring circulation drive.

Workers at the print shop are on a campaign to deliver three books a week based on shifts dedicated to Pathfinder production on the printing presses and in the shop's bindery.

The effort is aimed at eliminating by September 1 a backlog in the shop of titles produced for the first time in digital form by an international team of volunteers. The shop's effort will also make it possible to keep pace with the increased flow of titles from the volunteers.

These volunteers are in the midst of a big effort to put in digital form more than 350 titles on Pathfinder's backlist to facilitate rapid reprints.

April deliveries included two Education for Socialists bulletins on Cuba that have long been out of print: *Selected Speeches of Fidel Castro* and *Fidel Castro on Chile*.

Other titles included *An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory* by Ernest Mandel, to fill an order from a university; *February 1965: The Final Speeches* by Malcolm X; *To Speak the Truth*, a collection of speeches by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara; *My Life and The Revolution Betrayed* by Leon Trotsky; and *The Fight against Fascism in the U.S.A.*, an Education for Socialists bulletin which was put back on the press within two weeks because the initial delivery sold out.

In the first two weeks of May the shop delivered *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*, hard cover edition; *Cointelpro: The FBI's Secret War on Political Freedom*; *Socialism and Man in Cuba* by Che Guevara, the Spanish edition.

Titles scheduled to be delivered in the third week of May are *New International No. 4*; *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*; *The Last Year of Malcolm X*; and two Education for Socialist bulletins—*Bolshevism and the Russian Revolution* and *The Revolutionary Perspective for the United States*.

Fourth week: *The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara*; *In Defense of Marxism*, the Spanish edition; and *Fidel Castro: Nothing Can Stop the Course of History*.

Fifth week: *American Labor Struggles 1877-1934*; *Fascism and Big Business*; *Cuba for Beginners*.

Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces, the hard cover edition, is scheduled

for delivery in May.

In addition, the shop is also delivering this month two titles already in digital form: *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s* and *Black Music, White Business* by Frank Kofsky.

— LABOR NEWS BRIEFS —

Teachers march on Sacramento

Teachers from every school district in California rallied at the state capitol in Sacramento May 8 demanding increased funding for education and a raise in teachers' salaries. Many teachers organized to have their classes covered by others while they attended the rally of 8,000, organized by the California Federation of Teachers.

Louisiana: teachers rally for raise

Some 5,000 teachers skipped classes May 3 and marched on the state capital in Baton Rouge to press their demand for a pay raise. Among the many signs present was one carried by Jennifer Seery-Christian, a kindergarten teacher from East Baton Rouge, saying, "Teach + er = poor." "It's called the new math," she said. As Governor Michael Foster prepared to address the crowd, protesters booed and loudly chanted, "No more promises. Pay raise now."

GE workers rally for union

Three hundred workers rallied May 7 in front of the General Electric plant in Ravenna, Ohio, in support of an organizing drive by the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) at the plant. The action was part of a series of rallies leading up to the June 25 expiration of the company's contract with 14 national unions.

One of the workers' main demands is increased pensions. After 40 years of working for GE, some retirees receive less than \$600 a month. Recently, the IUE won the right to represent workers at the GE plants in Winston, Virginia, and Jefferson, Indiana.

Turkish rubber workers strike

Some 3,000 rubber workers in Turkey went on strike at the end of April in the first labor challenge to a government austerity program demanded by the International Monetary Fund in that country. The strikers were forced to return to work May 8 when the government decreed a 60-day strike postponement in the name of "national security."

Worried about the repercussions of the strike, Tire manufacturers Goodyear, Pirelli, and Brisa took out a joint newspaper ad denouncing the rubber workers for rejecting a 26.5 percent pay raise. Officials of the rubber workers union, Lastik-Is, pointed out that their demand for a 35 percent raise was modest compared to the rate of inflation, which last year was 60 percent.

Farmers protest repression in rural southern Mexico



CODEP
Committee for the Defense of the People's Rights (CODEP) of Oaxaca and other groups marched on Mexico City April 10 to protest arrests of peasants, militarization of rural areas, and social cutbacks. Top: CODEP members prepare to set off from Oaxaca City.

BY PEDRO RUBÉN JIMÉNEZ

ROME, Georgia—"Zapata lives, the struggle continues." That was one of the chants by members of the Committee for the Defense of the People's Rights (CODEP) who marched April 10 from the countryside to the capital of Oaxaca state, in southern Mexico. They commemorated the anniversary of the 1919 assassination of Mexican revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata and pressed their demands for democratic and social rights.

Zapata, a peasant from the central state of Morelos, was the central leader of Mexico's democratic revolution of 1910-20, leading the fight for a radical land reform. Many peasants and workers look to his revolutionary legacy in their struggles for justice today.

The marchers joined up with members of two sister organizations—the Indian Organization for Human Rights in Oaxaca (OIDHO) and the Civil Defense Committee for the Isthmus (CODECI)—that together make up the statewide group called the Ricardo Flores Magón Indigenous and People's Council of Oaxaca (CIPO-RFM).

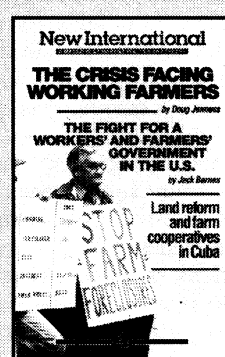
Some 13,000 people then marched north to Mexico City, converging with peasant groups from states around the country. They protested the militarization of their areas by

the federal army and demanded the lifting of orders of arrest issued against several local leaders and activists: Raúl Gatica, Jaquelin López Almazán, Ricardo Bautista, Dora María Moreno, Guadalupe Ortiz, Irene Mancías, and Pedro Rubén Jiménez.

The 40,000 marchers also protested government cutbacks in funding for townships led by CODEP, CODECI, and OIDHO, and demanded the reinstatement of workers who were fired from these city governments on Jan. 1, 1999, by officials loyal to the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) because of their union membership.

CODEP is an organization founded in 1993 to fight against discrimination by landlords and government officials, against exploitation and corruption, and for improved living conditions. It is made up of more than 300 peasant communities, two transportation unions, three taxi associations, and two other trade unions. It governs six local governments in rural Oaxaca. CODEP has mobilized hundreds of peasants and others over the last several years, and has faced constant repression by the police and other repressive agencies.

Pedro Rubén Jiménez is a member of CODEP's Organization and Mobilization Commission.



In New International no. 4

- The Fight for a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States by Jack Barnes
 - The Crisis Facing Working Farmers by Doug Jenness
 - Land Reform and Farm Cooperatives in Cuba, two speeches by Fidel Castro
- \$9.00

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Communist workers in Canada act to join with emerging vanguard fighters

BY STEVE PENNER
AND JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—"We're at a turning point in the building of the party," Michel Prairie told an April 22 public meeting attended by about 70 people in conjunction with the sixth constitutional convention of the Communist League in Canada. The convention took place April 21-23 in this city.

Prairie, a member of the Communist League's Central Committee, explained that the convention discussion had been centered on the steps the party needs to take to organize, structure, and transform itself by "fusing with the working-class resistance and emerging groups of vanguard fighters."

Only by acting decisively to carry out this proletarian perspective, he said, could the Communist League advance the forging of "a leadership capable of leading the working class and its allies in the struggle to replace Canada's capitalist rulers with a government of workers and farmers."

Other speakers on the panel included Vuk Krcmar-Grkavac, a leader of the Young Socialists; Carlos Catalán, a sewing machine operator in the Union of Needletrades, Textile and Industrial Employees (UNITE) and a leader of the Communist League in Montreal; and John Wilson, a coal miner from the United States and a leader of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) fraction of the Socialist Workers Party. The panel was chaired by Maria Isabel Le Blanc, a leader of the Communist League in Toronto.

Reconnaissance team meets fighters

Krcmar-Grkavac spent the week prior to the convention as part of a cross-country socialist "reconnaissance team" that met and talked politics with workers, farmers, and youth involved in struggles in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and northern Ontario. The number and scope of the fights the team was able to take part in show that "the ruling class is unable to carry out its stepped-up attacks on workers and farmers without provoking substantial resistance," he concluded.

In Alberta, for example, the team participated April 15-16 in rallies of 3,000 people in Calgary and 6,000 in Edmonton protesting Bill 11, the latest and deepest of the attacks on public health care by the provincial government headed by Conservative premier Ralph Klein. Bill 11 would permit provincial government funding of private hospitals and clinics. It is the most serious attempt by any government in Canada—provincial or federal—to privatize a section of the public health-care system won through the struggles of workers and farmers over decades. These actions sparked daily protests the following week at the provincial legislature in Edmonton.

The rallies were made up of workers from a wide range of unions, farmers who came by the busload from different rural communities, and large numbers of both youth and retired working people. This broad social



Militant/John Steele

Striking woodworkers rally in Durham, Ontario, in October. Communist League convention delegates discussed steps by party to transform itself by merging with the working-class resistance and the developing groups of militant workers and farmers.

movement is emerging in the wake of rising labor resistance in Alberta that includes strikes against the *Calgary Herald* newspaper, Labatts and Molsons breweries, Weyerhaeuser paper, and Canbra, a canola-processing plant.

In Saskatchewan, the team was invited to talk to farmers who had been part of last February's sit-in at the provincial legislature. This was one of a series of actions organized by farmers since last summer to demand emergency government aid in face of a devastating economic crisis resulting from the sharp decline in the price farmers receive for their products combined with the mounting costs of production.

Over the past year Saskatchewan farmers have organized tractorcades blocking the province's major highways, rallies of up to 10,000 farmers and their supporters, and the sit-in.

"They feel the depth of the crisis," the Young Socialists leader explained. "They know they're being robbed. And they're looking for a way to fight." Team members were able to sell five subscriptions to the *Militant*, two to the Spanish-language *Perspectiva Mundial*, and more than \$500 worth of Pathfinder books to workers and farmers in Alberta and Saskatchewan. One of the farmers bought a copy of issue no. 4 of the Marxist magazine *New International* because she wanted to read about farm co-operatives in Cuba. She also volunteered to visit local libraries to encourage them to carry Pathfinder books.

Defense of the Cuban revolution

Carlos Catalán was one of the 250 youth from across Canada who attended the 12th Congress of Latin American and Caribbean Students in Havana at the beginning of April. He reported on the growing resistance of workers and peasants in that region of the world to the devastating impact of the capitalist crisis. The Montreal garment worker pointed to the powerful attraction of Cuba's socialist revolution to fighters like these and stressed that defense of the Cuban revolution was central to the efforts to build a communist party and youth organization in Canada.

SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters spoke during the convention about the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service raid that had just taken place that morning in Miami on the home of distant relatives of Elián González, the six-year-old shipwrecked Cuban boy. The U.S. rulers have done everything they can to use this incident to attack Cuba's sovereignty and campaign against the Cuban revolution. Their actions, she stressed, can only be understood as part of "the 40-year war to the death between the dictatorship of the proletariat in Cuba and U.S. imperialism. That's why the months-long massive mobilizations of the Cuban people are so important. They have won the battle for world public opinion," she said.

Communist workers and youth have the

responsibility to bring into the intense discussion provoked by the INS assault "a class perspective that working people can't get from any other source," Waters insisted. They need to explain how the imperialist rulers are taking advantage of the support among working people in the United States for returning Elián to his country to burnish the public face of the INS—the most hated police force in the United States.

The U.S. rulers are not acting to defend the rights of Elián González, much less Cuban sovereignty, she pointed out. "They are doing it to strengthen the imperial force of the executive branch of the government so they can use the same powers against working people and fighters whenever they need to do so." She pointed to the then-impending assault on protesters camped on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques as a graphic example.

National rights of the Quebecois

Catalán described the intense political discussion that took place among participants at the Havana youth conference when the delegates from Quebec arrived and put up the Quebec blue-and-white fleur-de-lys flag, a symbol of the fight for the national rights of the Quebecois. Their action was challenged by some delegates from other parts of Canada who thought it was provocative and divisive.

The Quebecois delegates took the initiative of calling broadly attended meetings two evenings in a row and patiently explained why they're fighting for Quebec independence, the reality of the national oppression they face, and why working people across Canada will be united and strengthened by fighting for Quebec independence, not divided and weakened as opponents claim. Catalán pointed out that the self-confidence and determination of the Quebecois youth showed the impact that the rising working-class resistance is having on the capacity of the oppressed to fight for their rights. He also said that the capacity of the Young Socialists to advance a working-class perspective within this discussion attracted a number of the participants from Canada towards the revolutionary socialist youth organization. Two joined in the process of building and participating in the conference with the Young Socialists.

SWP leader and coal miner John Wilson stressed that a key component of the SWP orienting to the vanguard clusters of workers and farmers who are resisting the bosses' life-and-limb-threatening intensification of work and brutalizing conditions has been the rebuilding of its UMWA fraction. As a result the SWP now has seven working miners, including three in union mines. Nine months ago it didn't have one.

In order to link up with the growing resistance—including in coal regions—the SWP needed to restructure the party, reducing the size of many long-standing branches of the party in major metropolitan centers while establishing branch organizing com-

mittees in six new regions of the United States.

"Through reaching into the coalfields and living in the coal communities the SWP has a completely different purchase on what is happening among working people there" and the resistance that's "welling up underneath the surface," Wilson insisted.

In the week before the convention a socialist worker from the United States and a Young Socialist from Toronto traveled to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, to talk to coal miners who have been fighting attempts by the Canadian government to close the region's last remaining coal mine. Convention delegates discussed how the Communist League could reach out to coal miners in Canada, who remain an important component of the labor movement.

Looking toward the prairies

Branches of the Communist League currently exist in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal, the most weighty proletarian centers in the country.

Michel Prairie reported that convention delegates adopted a series of proposals to make it possible in the coming months for the League to respond more rapidly and flexibly as its branches and fractions organize to fuse energies and action with the resistance that is taking form.

The proposals included freeing up human and financial resources needed to allow the party to expand its geographic reach. The existing branches will be moving into smaller and less expensive headquarters, for example. On the eve of the convention both the Toronto and Vancouver branches made this decision. The weekend following the convention the Montreal branch moved into more sustainable premises.

Prairie explained that all three branches faced a major challenge to strengthen the League's fractions in the meatpacking division of the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW) and in UNITE by rapidly moving to eliminate one-person fractions and organizing political work along the axis of the fight to transform the unions into organizations for revolutionary struggle against capitalism.

This involves organized, detailed, and competent work by communist workers to link up with the ongoing skirmishes in the plants where they work and to increase the standing of the party among the most combative and class-conscious workers.

The convention also decided to take the first steps towards establishing a branch organizing committee on the prairies, where the resistance of workers and farmers has been deepening.

Setting up an organizing committee in the prairies won't transform the work of the party, Prairie explained. "It is what we do as a party to more effectively respond to the fights that is decisive," he said. The starting point of local units, whether branches or organizing committees, must be "doing whatever is necessary to deepen their participation in the class struggle."

This conclusion was reinforced by the experience of the Socialist Workers Party. In addition to Wilson, other leaders of the SWP reported to the convention how the party had begun to transform itself over the past year and a half. Beginning with an Active Workers Conference held in Pittsburgh in July 1998 the SWP had acted on the need to "structure party branches and union fractions through mass work."

Norton Sandler, organizer of the SWP's Trade Union Committee, gave a report to convention delegates on initial conclusions communists in the United States have drawn from these experiences. Sandler was one of the fraternal delegates from the SWP who participated in the convention. In addition, fraternal delegates attended from communist leagues in France, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, as well as from a group of communists in Iceland. The Young Socialists in both Canada and the United States also participated as fraternal delegates.

Sandler explained that reaching out to "places where you can see the proletarian movement in formation" took the party to places it could not have anticipated in advance. By taking steps to respond, the party became more open to seeing and being af-

Continued on Page 15

for further reading

New International no. 6

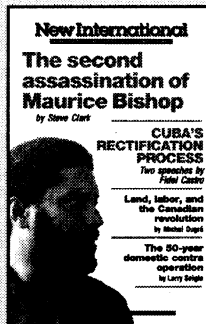
• Land, Labor, and the Canadian Revolution by Michel Dugré

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Puerto Ricans demand: U.S. Navy out!

Continued from front page

when they tried to walk the eight miles to the bombing range. Many others have announced plans to enter the Navy-occupied land in the days to come.

Those arrested included Ismael Guadalupe, a leader of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques;

restricted zones in the waters around Vieques limiting their right to fish. They filed a court suit demanding the right to enter the prohibited areas.

Aleida Encarnación, a leader of the Vieques Women's Alliance, was the featured speaker at the first of a series of "Fridays for Peace in Vieques" held May 12 in old

days after the raid to intimidate and violate the basic rights of the people of Vieques. Residents of Barrio Luján, just outside the entrance to the naval base, were not allowed to have visitors in their homes. The Puerto Rican cops blocked off part of the public road and detained dozens of fishing boats in the surrounding waters.

Restrictions on right to protest

The authorities have begun to relax some of the harsh conditions they imposed but are still seeking restrictions on the right to carry out protests.

National Guardsmen were sent to "protect" electric plants and other facilities all over Puerto Rico to try to intimidate electrical workers from carrying out their four-hour strike. According to Jaramillo, this is the first time since the 1973 electrical workers strike that the National Guard has occupied these plants—"a dangerous precedent in response to protests that have been completely peaceful."

On May 12, U.S. agents ordered participants in a demonstration initiated by the Socialist Front at the U.S. Federal Building not to use loudspeakers except during one hour between noon and 1:00 p.m. According to Jorge Farinacci, secretary of the Student General Council at the University of Puerto Rico here, when thousands of students and others demonstrated at the Ft. Buchanan base the day of the U.S. government raid, new restrictions were also established there. Some students were beaten by police when they challenged this.

For months prior to the evictions of protesters on the U.S.-run bombing range, demonstrators at the Peace and Justice Camp used a wide space in front of the gates of the base to protest the U.S. military presence. This and other camps were put up after a U.S. warplane dropped a bomb during a training exercise that killed a civilian Puerto Rican guard, David Sanes.

During the May 4 U.S. raid, marshals and FBI agents ordered everyone to leave and detained anyone who did not. After 10 to 12 hours of being handcuffed and denied food, water, and legal representation, the protesters were released without charges being filed. Some 226 were detained.

Luisa Guadalupe, 82, was one of the protesters who were detained. She insists that the arrests were illegal because they took place on Puerto Rican land and not Navy land.

Denied access to the public land near the

gate, anti-Navy forces have rented two tracts of land nearby to set up a new camp. Protesters who want the Navy out sleep on the site.

"This is a boxing match with many rounds," Luisa Guadalupe commented. "We are going to win the next round." It was almost six decades ago, she said, at the beginning of World War II, when the U.S. government gave her family 24 hours to leave their land, for which they were paid \$50 an acre. The land was turned over to the Navy for ammunition storage.

At a May 12 press conference, José Paralitici, a spokesperson for All Puerto Rico With Vieques, a coalition that is organizing "Fridays for Vieques" actions, said the possibility of a national work stoppage was under discussion among both unionists and students.

Jazmin and Aleli Canals, students active in the Vieques struggle at the University of Puerto Rico, described the political impact of the recent events on students. "Consciousness has really changed between last August and May of this year," Aleli Canals pointed out. "People are more opposed to the fact that the U.S. government is controlling us, trying to manipulate us." This sentiment was registered, she said, in the shutdown of the campus, organized by students on the morning of the raid and the accompanying marches and demonstrations.

Jasmin Canals, her sister, added that the mobilizations around Vieques build on the experiences acquired by many students and workers during the 1998 battles against the privatization of the state-owned Puerto Rican telephone company. "I recognized faces of workers I knew from the 1998 telephone strike on the picket line at Ft. Buchanan," she remarked.

Luis Rivera, a member of the Young Socialists in Chicago, contributed to this article.

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

NEW ZEALAND

Christchurch

Protest Cop Brutality—Speak Out Against the Killing of Steven Wallace. Sat., May 27, 7:00 p.m. 129 Gloucester St. Donation: \$3. Tel: (3) 365-6055.

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Militant/Betsey Stone

May 12 demonstration in front of the Federal Building in Puerto Rican capital of San Juan. Banner reads "We must get the criminal Navy out."

former boxing champion José "Chegüi" Torres; Graciani Miranda, former president of the Puerto Rican Bar Association; and Rev. Margarita Sánchez of the National Ecumenical Movement.

Earlier in the week Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) leaders Rubén Berrios and Jorge Fernández were arrested on Navy-occupied land and charged with misdemeanor trespass, which carries a maximum penalty of six months in jail and a \$500 fine.

Under an executive order signed by President Clinton the day of the U.S. raid, they could have been charged with a felony carrying 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Vieques fishermen have been denouncing the imposition by U.S. authorities of

San Juan. Her husband, Carlos Zenón, is a leader of the decades-long struggle by Vieques fishermen to get the Navy out of their island. Her two sons, Cacimar and Pedro Zenón Encarnación, are among the small group who managed to elude the Navy and remain in the restricted area during the week after the raid.

The Vieques Women's Alliance organizes protests, health campaigns, fund-raising, and education about the struggle for their land. "The voice of women is very important in this fight," said Encarnación in an interview. She commented that on a speaking tour in the Caribbean island of Grenada she had a chance to talk with people who described Washington's invasion of their country in 1983, which was rehearsed in Vieques.

"They train on our island to invade other peoples," she said, giving the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama as another example.

Encarnación described how the Puerto Rican police and National Guard worked in league with U.S. forces during and in the

CALENDAR

NEW YORK

Manhattan

Puerto Rican Resistance Weekend! Picket for Vieques. Fri. May 19, 5:00 p.m., 26 Federal Plaza.

"Albizu Lives in the Puerto Rican Resistance." Speakers: Pedro Aponte, author; Ismael Guadalupe, leader of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques; Rafael Cancel Miranda, leader of the Puerto Rican independence struggle; Luis Sosa, Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico. Sat., May 20, 5:00 p.m. Hunter College, Rm 615 West Bldg.

Bronx

Freedom Mass for the Puerto Rican Political Prisoners. Sun., May 21, 12:00 noon. Resurrection Church, 790 Elton Ave. (Elton & 158th St.) For more information on activities call: (718) 409-3595; (718) 601-4751; (212) 677-0619.

OHIO

Heath

Rally to Support Locked-Out Kaiser Aluminum Workers in U.S. Local 341, Newark, Ohio, and Striking Molding Technologies Workers in U.S. Local 341-05, Hebron and Newark, Ohio. Sat., May 20, 12:00 noon. State Rte. 79, Heath, Ohio. For more information: (740) 928-4494.

TEXAS

Houston

Rally to Support Locked-Out Kaiser Aluminum Workers. Gather at Crown Plaza Hotel, 2222 West Loop S., for march to Maxxam Inc. headquarters, 5847 San Felipe. Tues., May 23, 3:00 p.m. For more information, call: (713) 960-9660.

WASHINGTON

Pasco

March for Amnesty and Just Wages. Protest to support farm workers' fight for a wage increase in the cherry harvest and a new amnesty law. Memorial Park, 14th Street and Bonneville. Sun., June 4, 1:00 p.m. Sponsors include United Farm Workers (UFW) and the AFL-CIO. For more information, call UFW: (509) 839-4903.

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FLORIDA: Miami: 4582 N.E. 2nd Ave. Zip: 33137. Tel: (305) 573-3355. E-mail: 103171.1674@compuserve.com

GEORGIA: Atlanta: 230 Auburn Ave. N.E. Zip: 30303. Tel: (404) 577-7976. E-mail: atlpathfinder@cs.com

ILLINOIS: Chicago: 1223 N. Milwaukee Ave. Zip: 60622. Tel: (773) 342-1780. E-mail: 104077.511@compuserve.com

IOWA: Des Moines: 3720 6th Ave. Zip: 50313. Tel: (515) 288-2970. E-mail: 104107.1412@compuserve.com

MASSACHUSETTS: Boston: 683 Washington St. Mailing address: P.O. Box 702. Zip: 02124. Tel: (617) 282-2254. E-mail: 103426.3430@compuserve.com

MICHIGAN: Detroit: 7414 Woodward Ave. Zip: 48202. Tel: (313) 875-0100. E-mail: 104127.3505@compuserve.com

MINNESOTA: St. Paul: 1569 Sherburne Ave. W., St. Paul. Zip: 55104. Tel: (651) 644-6325. E-mail: TC6446325@cs.com

MISSOURI: St. Louis: Box 19166, 2910 Meramec Street. Zip 63118. Tel: (314) 924-2500. E-mail: MilPath167@cs.com

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NEW JERSEY: Newark: 237 Washington St. (near Market St.) Suite 305. Mailing address: Riverfront Plaza, P.O. Box 200117. Zip: 07102-0302. Tel: (973) 643-3341. E-mail: 104216.2703@compuserve.com

NEW YORK: Brooklyn: 1068 Fulton Ave., 3rd floor. Mailing address: PMB 197, 655 Fulton St. Zip: 11217. Tel: (718) 398-7850. E-mail: brooklynswp@yahoo.com
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Upper Manhattan: 540 W. 165 St. E-mail: swuptown@usa.net;
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OHIO: Cleveland: 7535 Broadway. Zip: 44105. Tel: (216) 641-9405. E-mail: 103253.1111@compuserve.com

PENNSYLVANIA: Philadelphia: 711 E. Passyunk Ave. (Two blocks south of South St. at 5th St.). Zip: 19147. Tel: (215) 627-1237. E-mail: 104502.1757@compuserve.com
Pittsburgh: 1003 E. Carson St. Zip 15203. Tel: (412) 381-9785. E-mail: 103122.720@compuserve.com

TEXAS: Houston: 619 West 8th St. Zip: 77007. Tel: (713) 869-6550. E-mail: 102527.2271@compuserve.com

WASHINGTON, D.C.: 3541 14th St. NW Zip: 20010. Tel: (202) 722-6221. E-mail: 75407.3345@compuserve.com

WASHINGTON: Seattle: 2533 16th Ave. South. Zip: 98144. Tel: (206) 323-1755. E-mail: 74461.2544@compuserve.com

AUSTRALIA

Sydney: 1st Flr, 176 Redfern St., Redfern NSW 2016. Mailing address: P.O. Box K879, Haymarket Post Office, NSW 1240. Tel: 02-9690-1533.

E-mail: 106450.2216@compuserve.com

LAX, as in 'relax'—In 1999, Los Angeles International Airport maintained its nationwide lead in



Harry Ring

the number of near-collisions. Traffic controllers said understaffing and heavy workloads were partly responsible.

'Liberal' racism?—James Hodges, governor of South Carolina, made that state the last of the 50 to declare Martin Luther King Day a holiday for state employees. At the same time he established a Confederate Memorial Day.

Where did we hear this before?—More than a year ago, Riverside, California, police shot to death Tyisha Miller, a 19-year-old woman who was Black. She was asleep in her car when the cops broke the door open and shot her. They claimed they broke the door because she seemed in need of help, but reached for a gun when they

smashed the door window. Now a lawyer for the city says a toxicology report shows she was suffering an overdose of an illegal drug. He said this confirmed the judgment of the cops that she "had to be rescued."

They found the formula—Foundation Health Systems, California's biggest managed care operation, registered a 22 percent gain in profits for the first quarter of the year. How did they accomplish this? Simple. They jacked up premiums and pared the payroll.

Rational, no—A recent L.A.

Daily News headline: "Stocks rally in spite of jobs surge."

Less hypocritical than most—We didn't care for the video *The Last Days of Chez Nous*, but we got a kick out of the jacket blurb: "A story of lust, betrayal, and other family values."

Social study (I)—A news feature on the frugal rich pointed to millionaires who balk at paying \$40 for a new shirt. Our initial reaction was that you can hardly blame even a millionaire for objecting to such prices. Then we realized we've been

buying our clothing in thrift stores for so many years we didn't know how much a new shirt cost. We set out to find out.

Social study (II)—We asked the clerk at the local video store how much he pays for new shirts. He confided his only new shirt was an Xmas gift from his mother. The rest came from thrift stores. He speculated on the price of a new shirt, but didn't really know. The same with two staffers at the branch library. They, too, were thrift store shoppers. One guy added, "Even the thrift stores are a ripoff—they want your last centavo!"

Computers not solving employers' long-term crisis

The excerpt below is taken from "So Far from God, So Close to Orange County: The Deflationary Drag of Finance Capital," a talk presented at a regional socialist educational conference held in Los Angeles over the 1994-95 New Year's weekend. The entire talk appears in the pages of *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, copyright © 1999 Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY JACK BARNES

When I began preparing for this meeting, I assumed I would probably open by saying a few things about an event closer even than Mexico—the bankruptcy of the Orange County government here in California earlier this month. It never occurred to me that we would have to start with Mexico instead. That shift is itself an apt reflection of the heightened volatility of capitalism and the growing insecurity this brings into the

from the pages of *Capitalism's World Disorder*

lives of working people and their allies the world over.

The world capitalist economy has entered a long-term deflationary crisis, a contraction that cannot be fundamentally reversed by the ups and downs of the business cycle. With their profit rates under long-term pressure, the capitalists are in their "lean and mean" period, their "just-on-time" period, their "downsizing," "computerizing," and "de-layering" period. They are laying off workers and other employees, speeding up production, and raking in short-term cash in the bargain.

But the one thing the capitalists are not doing, and are incapable of doing, is expanding productive capacity to anywhere near the degree they need to fuel another gigantic boom, set industrial profit rates on a long-term upward course, and accelerate capital accumulation. Even as capitalists temporarily boost their returns by cutting costs and taking a bigger slice of market share away from their rivals, the long-run profit expect-

tations of capital are such that they are still not investing in new plant and equipment that draws more and more workers into expanded production.

The money that is going into new equipment goes largely into ways to make us work faster to produce more with fewer co-workers. That does not expand productive capacity, however. It intensifies speedup and extends the workweek. But that alone does not create the basis for the rising profit rates and capital accumulation that marked the post-World War II capitalist boom until it began running out of steam by the early 1970s.¹

Blowing up balloons of debt

In fact, instead of issuing stock to finance expansion—the classic source of "capital formation" extolled in standard economics textbooks—U.S. corporations for most of the 1980s and 1990s have actually bought more previously offered stock from each other than they have issued in new shares. Capitalists have also issued large quantities of high-interest corporate bonds—gone deep into debt, in other words—to finance takeovers and buyouts.²

So, the world's propertied families have been fighting among themselves more and more to use credit to corner a bigger cut of the surplus value they collectively squeeze from working people. They have been blowing up great balloons of debt. But ever since the 1987 stock market panic, and at an accelerated pace since the onset of world depression conditions at the opening of the 1990s, the capitalists have been plagued by the problem that first one balloon, then another, and then yet another begins to deflate. And they have no way of knowing which balloon will go next until they start hearing the "whoosh," and by then it is often too late.

All of us were children once and have blown up balloons. They can expand very slowly, very gradually. But then try to let the air out. That is harder to control. Remember? The balloons can get away and ricochet all over the room.

With returns on investments in capacity-expanding plant and equipment under pressure since the mid-1970s, owners of capital have not only been cost cutting; the holders of paper have been borrowing larger and larger amounts to buy and sell various forms of paper securities at a profit. They blew up a giant balloon of debt in Orange County over a period of years; the bondholders thought they had died and gone to heaven. Then the balloon began to deflate, as they



Worker at Samsung auto manufacturing plant in south Korea. The limited investment the capitalists are making goes "largely into ways to make us work faster to produce more with fewer co-workers. That does not expand productive capacity, however."

learned the hard way that interest rates go up as well as down. When the balloon international bankers had inflated in Mexico in the 1980s began to collapse, the bondholders stepped in and blew it back up for a while. But in Orange County, the more local officials borrowed to make a killing using public funds to gamble with bond merchants, the greater their vulnerability became. Earlier this year, when rates started rising and low-interest bond issues were

suddenly no longer available, the moment of truth arrived.

Now the capitalists and their public representatives—and not just in Mexico or Orange County—have been given another warning of the long-run possibilities of an uncontrollable deflation.

Over the past couple of decades, upturns in the business cycle have relied on floating large amounts of fictitious capital—ballooning debt and other paper values.

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO

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THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

May 30, 1975

NEW YORK—In the largest outpouring of protest ever among New York City's Chinese community, 15,000 demonstrators marched through Chinatown to city hall on Monday, May 19. They were demanding an end to police brutality and an end to the discrimination faced by Chinese and Chinese-Americans.

The demonstration took place one week after a march by 2,500 Chinatown residents protesting the arrest and beating of Peter Yew on April 26.

Yew had objected to the mistreatment by police of a Chinese motorist involved in a traffic argument with a white man. Police responded by beating Yew and dragging him to the police station, where he was stripped and beaten again.

At a May 13 court hearing, attended by 300 of Yew's supporters, the original charges of felonious assault and obstructing governmental administration were reduced to misdemeanor charges. Trial is set for June 3.

The incident has sparked a protest movement aimed not just at Yew's case and the police brutality it represents, but also at discrimination faced by Chinese-Americans in all spheres of life.

At one point the protesters passed a city correctional institutions bus filled with Black prisoners. The prisoners banged on the side of the bus in solidarity and shouted, "Chinese power! Chinese power!"

THE MILITANT
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May 29, 1950

Washington is still using economic extortion and pressure on Yugoslavia in an effort to wrest political concessions from the Tito regime and force it to support Western imperialism in the "cold war," it was revealed last week. This United States economic squeeze amounts to a hidden blockade paralleling the open one imposed by the Kremlin. It has been greatly intensified since Tito declared last February that the Yugoslavs would rather "go naked" than abandon their socialist principles and support the imperialist bloc.

Loans promised to Yugoslavia by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which is controlled by financially all-powerful U.S. capitalism, are being held up on the pretext that the revolutionary government must first agree to pay the debts owed by the old monarchist regime to private international bankers.

The facts about this move instigated by U.S. State Department were revealed by the well-informed Washington columnist, Robert S. Allen in the May 18 N.Y. Post.

These "international bankers," says Allen, "are demanding settlements on musty deals, some dating back to early 1900, before the World Bank grants Yugoslavia a \$25,000,000 loan it is seeking in order to resist Russia."

¹This trend continued in the 1990s despite talk in the big-business press about an "investment boom." The total stock of industrial plant and equipment in the United States has grown at an annual rate of 2 percent since 1980, compared to an annual rate of 3.9 percent over the previous three decades.

Investment as a share of national income has also fallen in the imperialist countries as a whole since 1980.

"There can be little doubt about the option that corporate America has chosen in the 1990s: downsizing has triumphed over rebuilding," wrote Stephen Roach, chief economist for the Wall Street investment house, Morgan Stanley, in November 1996. "Downsizing means making do with less—realizing efficiencies by pruning both labor and capital.... Historically, periods of accelerating productivity have been associated with increased employment."

Roach reports in a later article that computer hardware accounted for 57 percent of the growth in capital spending from 1994 to 1997. But the

vast majority of such spending goes to replace obsolete equipment, not expand capacity. With the slowdown in the U.S. capitalist economy in late 1998, capital investment *excluding computers* was in fact declining.

²"One of the consequences of corporate restructuring," Wall Street economist Edward Yardeni told the *Barron's* financial weekly in March 1996, "has been to generate an enormous amount of corporate cash flow.... [Companies] have hesitated to build new plant and equipment. Instead, they are to a certain extent buying their competitors—and by doing so they are basically buying back stock." In the third quarter of 1998, according to U.S. government figures, the withdrawal of shares from the market via buybacks and corporate mergers and acquisitions reached record levels, for a net shrinkage in shares—after accounting for stock newly issued—at an annual rate of \$234 billion. Since the early 1980s, the nearly \$2 trillion in stock that has disappeared from the market through buybacks and corporate takeovers is greater than that newly issued.

U.S., Britain out of Sierra Leone

Washington, London, and their allies should end their military intervention in Sierra Leone and get all their troops, warplanes, and ships out. They are trampling on the national sovereignty of Sierra Leone and the rights of working people in the region.

The British and U.S. governments are stepping up their military drive and drawing in larger numbers of troops and war matériel from Nigeria, India, Bangladesh, and elsewhere. The imperialist powers are literally driven to attack working people at home and abroad. They are pressed by the workings of the capitalist market system, including the long-term decline in profit rates, the growing interimperialist competition for access to cheap raw materials and markets, and the need to gain the edge in a world marked by capitalist overproduction.

Whole sections of Africa are marked by the conflicts between French, British, and U.S. imperialism and the widening impact of an overburdening foreign debt, for which payments are squeezed out of the lives of workers and peasants, and out of the land and resources of each country. Capitalism inflicts famine, disease, social dislocation, deteriorating infrastructure, and political turmoil on hundreds of millions.

Unable to chart a way out of this social catastrophe in the interests of humanity, and covering up their vulturistic aims, the imperialists resurrect the idea of the "white man's burden" to take on the problems of the great "dark continent." The big-business mouthpieces are working overtime to depict—with the usual imperial arrogance and class blindness that comes with it—one African country after another as barbaric, backward, and unable to control repeated "tribal" wars.

They work hard to divert us from the reality that the underdevelopment and oppression is the fruit of what the colonial and imperialist powers have imposed and maintained for hundreds of years, including every possible way to foster divisions among the oppressed.

The main goal of all parties involved—Washington and London, the capitalist governments in Africa and Asia that are sending troops at the imperialists' behest, and the current government in Sierra Leone as well as the opposition forces—is to keep working people out of political life and

prevent them from acting in their own interests.

Washington and London well know the capacities of workers and peasants in Africa. Over the past half century, anticolonial and revolutionary struggles have swept South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso, the Congo, and Algeria, to name a few of the places where toilers have stood up to the imperial powers and fought to reorder the social and economic relations they had imposed.

Millions learned they had important allies who were ready to act around the world to join in their struggle. Liberation fighters fought in common trenches across the continent. Cuban internationalist volunteers were found on every possible front. And fighters in North America such as Malcolm X championed their cause and sought to deepen the struggle inside the United States against a common enemy.

Speaking at a time of rising anticolonial struggle, Malcolm X told an audience in Detroit that "colonialism or imperialism, as the slave system of the West is called, is not something that's just confined to England or France or the United States.... it's an international power structure" used "to suppress the masses of dark-skinned people all over the world and exploit them of their natural resources." Pointing to the upsurge in Africa at the time, Malcolm said that in addition to the "revolution on the outside of the house," the "powers that be are beginning to see that this struggle on the outside by the Black man is affecting, infecting the Black man who is on the inside of that structure. I hope you understand what I'm trying to say."

The challenge for working people and fighting youth in both the United States and Britain is to reject each one of the rationalizations for imperialist military adventures and repression at home, and never to give one millimeter to these brutal governments in their use of armed forces and police. It is to deepen the struggle "inside the house" of British or U.S. imperialism, and chart a revolutionary course to replace the number one regime of this "international power structure" with a government of workers and farmers that can join with others around the world to chart a new course for humanity.

Social security—two class views

Two counterposed class perspectives on health care, social security, and retirement pensions were put forward this past week in the United States. Presidential candidate George W. Bush made his initial proposals in what he hopes will be the beginning of a sweeping transformation—away from Social Security and Medicare. The first step would be "allowing" individuals to invest a portion of their payroll taxes in stocks or with money management firms.

Two days later, thousands of mine workers and their supporters, mobilized by the United Mine Workers union, rallied in Washington to demand Congress guarantee lifetime health coverage for retirees and widows. The outcome of this battle affects wide areas of the country.

Bush presented Social Security as a pension plan where "young" and "productive" people "pay" for the "retired," obscuring the class questions involved. His proposal points away from government-guaranteed old-age pensions and medical coverage, and income and health care for disabled people and dependents of workers who are disabled or who die, and supplemental income for workers who earn very little. His attack is not against the "elderly" but against the entire working class.

Vice president Albert Gore, while condemning Bush's proposals, maintained the same framework of the debate and the notion that the Social Security system will go bankrupt by mid-century.

As its name implies, Social Security is a social conquest, conceded by the super-wealthy ruling class in face of the rising industrial union movement in the 1930s, and later expanded as a result of the victories in the civil rights movement and the battles for Black liberation in the 1950s and early 1960s. The goal is to prevent the bosses from tearing the working class apart, imposing horrendous conditions on sections of the laboring classes, and counting as expendable the years before and after they are able to

draw profits from the labor of men and women in factories, mines, and mills.

The goal of the working class must be to ensure that social security comes out of the current production by a class, for a class. It is a fight by the labor movement to establish social rights for all, not individual money-management investment schemes to hope for some sort of retirement.

The aim must be to bring all welfare payments, all medical claims, all supplemental payments for education and child care into a comprehensive, nationwide, government-protected entitlement.

The labor movement needs to fight to extend the miners' approach to the entire working class and integrate it into Social Security. The mine workers' demands point toward social rights that should be universal, never held hostage to profit demands or partisan politics, and assured to all, young and old.

In the book *Capitalism's World Disorder*, Jack Barnes extensively addresses the stakes in this battle for the working class. He points out that workers "should never present today's crisis of the propertied classes and their social system as primarily an economic crisis. No, it is the great political and moral crisis of our time. It is proof that only the working class has a chance to resolve this crisis and begin transforming society in a truly human way. Because only the working class, the propertyless class, has no interest in turning like dogs on any of the victims of the crisis-ridden capitalist system.

"That is why the battle for jobs, the battle for solidarity, the battle against racism and the oppression of women, the battle against immigrant-bashing, the battle for social protection—why all of these are a battle for the life and death of the labor movement. *They are the battle for the time and space to prepare a socialist revolution!* That is what is at stake in pulling the working class together."

Atlanta meeting sends off farmers to Cuba congress

BY BILL KALMAN

MIAMI—Fifty people packed the meeting hall of Haitian rights group Veye Yo here to send off a delegation of seven farmers and two workers to the May 15-17 congress of ANAP, the National Association of Small Farmers of Cuba (see article starting on front page). The Miami Coalition to End the Cuban Embargo sponsored the meeting.

Members of this delegation, organized by the Atlanta Network on Cuba, were largely recruited through meetings featuring participants in a visit by U.S. farmers in February.

The delegation consists of Basu, a vegetable farmer from Illinois; Lee Dobbins and Willie Head, Georgia farm-

ers who went on the February trip to Cuba; Francis Goodman, Randall Jasper, and John Kinsman, dairy farmers from Wisconsin; Linda Joyce, an airline worker from Atlanta serving as the delegation's interpreter; Dexter Randall, a Vermont dairy farmer; and Maggie Trowe, a meat packer from Minnesota.

"Being from the most powerful country in the world, going to Cuba reveals that what you hear about their revolution is a lie," Lee Dobbins told the audience. "By going there you have a chance to see what Cuba means for humanity."

Bill Kalman is a member of United Transportation Union Local 1138 in Hialeah, Florida.

Cuban farmers discuss politics, production

Continued from front page

Fulgencio Batista.

ANAP organizes individual small farmers and farmers who operate in two kinds of cooperatives—Credit and Service Cooperatives, which are voluntary associations of peasants who maintain their individual farms but pool efforts to organize supplies and sell their produce, and Agricultural Production Cooperatives, voluntary associations of farmers who combine their land and machinery and farm collectively. ANAP also organizes independent peasants in the Peasant Association. Small farmers in Cuba possess about 20 percent of the arable land, and produce around one third of the agricultural production.

The delegates represent 200,000 farmers in Cuba, of which 150,000 own their land individually or collectively, and the rest are family members who work with them. Some 28,000 of the members are women.

At the first plenary session the delegates discussed their efforts to improve production of several important crops, including sugar cane, tobacco, and coffee. For each crop, ANAP delegates discussed and adopted goals for the next year. Later they discussed raising overall production, reducing costs, and making more meat, milk, and vegetables available for sale at markets in the towns and cities at lower prices. Crop yields vary greatly from cooperative to cooperative. Delegates from coops that have increased production explained how they have done it, discussing the importance of a stable workforce, of careful and accurate accounting, and above all of leadership.

A woman from Guantánamo described how her coop increased milk production and undercut price-gougers in the local farmers market. Virtually all dairy cattle are milked by hand in Cuba. There is a milk shortage, some farmers explained, due to the drought that has affected the region in the last couple of years, and due to the shortage of feed.

Cuba imported grain for animals, powdered milk, and many other food products from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union prior to 1989 when the regimes there began to fall "like a meringue," as Cubans say. When aid and favorable trade relations with those countries ended abruptly, Cuba went through a period of extreme economic dislocation and shortages known as the "special period." Production contracted by an estimated 35 percent between 1989 and 1993.

Milk production, like that of other agricultural products, has been recovering in the past few years, but is still far below the quantities needed. Throughout even the worst period, however, pregnant women, children under seven years old, and the elderly have continued to receive a government-guaranteed liter of milk a day.

During a discussion on the sugar cane goal, ANAP president Orlando Lugo Fonte explained that the projected 25 tons per acre for sugar cane production would mean increased food supplies for all Cubans. "We can use some of the land now used for sugar cane for other crops," he pointed out. "We have to diversify the crops we grow in our cooperatives. As word of this gets out the workers will know we can achieve more food production and improve life."

Raúl Castro explained the importance of the peasants in Cuba's history of revolutionary struggle. "The Mambí army fought with machetes for Cuban independence," he said. "Who were they? Peasants. Who formed the backbone of the Rebel Army 40 years ago? Peasants. Today it is very costly to maintain the Cuban army, and peasants play an important role. The unity of the workers and peasants is the motor force of the revolution."

Delegates also expressed their determination to continue the mobilizations of the Cuban people demanding the U.S. government allow Elián González to return with his father to Cuba.

Some 70 international guests are attending the congress from Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Chile, Spain, and the United States. A leader of Brazil's Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST) read greetings on behalf of the international delegations.

The U.S. delegation, sponsored by the Atlanta Network on Cuba, includes seven farmers and two workers. The participants in the trip include two farmers from Georgia, a farmer from Illinois who grows organic vegetables, and four dairy farmers. Three of the dairy farmers are from Wisconsin and are members of the Family Farm Defenders and the international organization Via Campesina. Another dairy farmer is from Vermont and belongs to Rural Vermont.

All are activists in the movement of small farmers in the United States fighting to keep from losing their land through the economic squeeze caused by capitalism's low commodity prices, scarce credit, and rising costs of production. The farmers who are Black are also part of the movement to win monetary compensation and debt relief for the racist policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which have driven tens of thousands of farmers who are Black off their land in the last decades.

Willie Head, a vegetable farmer from Georgia, brought greetings to the congress on behalf of the U.S. delegation. The ANAP delegates responded with a standing ovation.

The congress concludes its work May 17, the 39th anniversary of the founding of ANAP.

Communist League convention in Canada

Continued from Page 11

fect by the deepening resistance of vanguard layers of workers and farmers. "It's not that the class struggle, like some supernatural force, changed us," Sandler noted. "We had to act first. That's the starting point. But the more we followed the natural lines of resistance of the working class, the easier it became to see what we need to be doing to reorganize and restructure our branches and fractions as we become part of the vanguard forces that are coming together.

"And this process is only beginning," Sandler stressed.

Communist trade union work

Prairie reported that to carry out this proletarian perspective the convention reaffirmed the League's effort to build national fractions in UNITE and in the meatpacking sector of the UFCW. At the center of this effort is the priority of getting members who are working by themselves into union fractions of two or three members in a workplace. The majority today are in fractions of one.

Joe Young, a worker at Agromex—a pork processing plant near Montreal, Quebec—underlined the importance of getting jobs at the heart of production: sewing machine operators in garment and cutting operations in meatpacking. This was one of the proposals adopted by the convention. Because of their decisive role in production these workers will play a key role in the labor resistance, the fight to transform the unions, and in the forging of a working-class leadership.

During the convention Young and several other delegates who are meat packers described the ongoing guerrilla resistance to the brutal working conditions and the complete disregard of workers' health and safety by profit-hungry bosses. He explained that at his workplace there are always people off work as a result of repetitive-motion injuries, knife cuts, or falling equipment. At the same time the company forces injured workers to do "light duty" to reduce its worker compensation costs.

"Because of these conditions," Young maintained, "we need to join together with our co-workers in figuring out how to wage an effective fight to defend workers' health and safety. We also need to pay special attention to working with League members injured on the job to help them be part of the union fractions we are building."

Young also sharply described the conservatizing impact on communist workers of being alone in a factory without a fraction of one or two other communist workers to collaborate with.

John Steele, a meat packer and UFCW member in Toronto, explained how just over a year ago workers in his plant at Quality Meats were forced to take a 40 percent wage cut and lose many benefits after a four-month strike.

Nevertheless, they continue to find ways to resist the employers' attacks and fight for safer working conditions.

Steele described how workers in the bonding room acted to protect themselves from two ammonia leaks. The foreman refused to take any action to stop production and

clear the area. In response, a number of workers left the area returning only after the toxic gas was cleared up.

The Toronto meat packer emphasized the importance of communist workers becoming more a part of these fights, which often take the form of guerrilla job actions. "Socialist propaganda on the job, while important, cannot be our starting point. We have to be at the center of the fights being waged by our co-workers," he said.

Sandler added that the end of the labor retreat has now increased the possibility and necessity of building fractions whose work is centered on the strategic goal of transforming the unions into weapons of revolutionary struggle.

"You can measure your progress toward this goal by the standing of the party in the eyes of co-workers involved in common activity with us," the SWP leader affirmed. "As we become more part of these fights our co-workers get more confidence in us, our reliability, and our competence." As a result they want to get to know the party more and to work more closely with it.

Some will decide to join. Our perspective is that "organizing committees will become branches through recruitment," Sandler noted, "not by transferring members in from other cities." More youth will be attracted to the Young Socialists and the party as they carry out this common proletarian perspective. The party will be transformed in the process.

Publishing Pathfinder books in French

One of the decisions of the convention, reported by Prairie—who is director of the Communist League's French-language publication program—was to assign important human and financial resources to the translation, editing, and publishing by Pathfinder of four new "basic works of the communist movement" in French—*The History of American Trotskyism*, *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, and *Socialism on Trial* by James P. Cannon, the founding leader of the SWP, as well as *In Defense of Marxism* by Leon Trotsky, one of the central leaders of the October 1917 Russian Revolution.

"Having these books in French is crucial for winning fighters whose first language is French to the communist movement and building a homogeneous party in Canada," said Prairie. "This is key to building the communist movement in Quebec, where 80 percent of the population is French-speaking."

In the past three years Pathfinder has published the French-language translations of *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics* and *Capitalism's World Disorder*, by SWP leader Jack Barnes, and the issue of *Nouvelle Internationale* with the SWP resolution "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War."

Prairie stressed the irreplaceable contribution by supporters of the communist movement internationally and in Canada to keeping in print and expanding the use of Pathfinder books.

The convention reaffirmed the importance of pursuing the effort to substantially increase the number of supporters of the Communist League involved in the international effort to digitize all of Pathfinder's titles so that they can be rapidly and more



Militant/Heidi Rose

Top: Michel Prairie, a leader of the Communist League in Canada speaking at an April 22 public meeting in Toronto in conjunction with the League's convention. Left: Vuk Krcmar-Grkavac, a leader of the Young Socialists, speaking at the public forum about his experiences on a cross-country socialist "reconnaissance team" that met and talked politics with workers, farmers, and youth in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.



cheaply reprinted and made available to fighters when needed anywhere in the world.

The crucial participation of supporters in the French-language publication program of the Communist League and in the work of Pathfinder Press Distribution in Toronto, which ensures that orders for Pathfinder books are rapidly dispatched to commercial bookstores as well as to workers, farmers, and youth who need them across Canada, is subordinate to the international priority of completing the digitization of Pathfinder books as soon as possible.

Before and after the public meeting, attractive displays of Pathfinder books were on sale in the entering hall, including copies of several newly reprinted titles with more legible fonts and in some cases redesigned covers. Two on-line Internet screens attracted dozens of participants, showing how two databases are used to organize the work of the more than 140 volunteers helping with the digitizing of Pathfinder books and with the French-language publication program.

The meeting ended with an appeal for contributions to a \$10,000 Communist League Party-Building Fund launched at the

convention. Rosemary Ray, who participated in the Vancouver-Toronto reconnaissance team, explained that the campaign aimed to help finance the French-language publications program, subsidize the large quantity of Pathfinder books that had been made available to participants in the OCLAE conference at less than cost, and cover the expenses of the cross-country teams that took place before the convention, as well as future teams. Some \$6,070 in contributions and pledges was collected from participants at the meeting. The nine-week fund drive ends June 25.

On the final day the delegates met in a closed session to elect a new Central Committee, the body responsible for directing the work of the party nationally between conventions. The convention took the opportunity to elect a substantially renewed Central Committee.

Assigned by the convention to act as a nominations commission, the outgoing Central Committee proposed to release two longtime party leaders who had served on the Central Committee for several decades and to elect a committee that would include a new generation of party leaders. Half the members of the party's incoming Central Committee are in their 20s, and the average age of Central Committee members dropped from 54 to 38. The members of the new Central Committee are Carlos Catalán, Christian Cournoyer, Michel Dugré, Maria Isabel Le Blanc, Michel Prairie, and Joe Young.

LETTERS

Downwind in Los Alamos

While watching the ABC-TV news on the Cerro Grande fire now burning at Los Alamos, New Mexico, I was struck by the statement to the press by Jim Paxon of the U.S. Fire Service. Paxon said that the fire would keep burning for some time and "we simply don't have enough people power, and machines and aircraft to stop it right now." Of course the people, machines, and aircraft exist—they just aren't being given to the firefighters.

Many homes in Los Alamos have already been destroyed and 11,000 people have been evacuated. The fire has also now entered the Indian lands of Santa Clara Canyon.

And it threatens the Los Alamos National Laboratory—one of the plants used to manufacture the atomic bombs dropped on

Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The fire has come within 50 feet of Area 55 of the Los Alamos Nuclear Research Facility where plutonium, one of the most deadly radioactive substances known to humanity, is stored.

According to ABC news, tests after the fire started have shown "there is slightly more radiation in the ground water." If one looks at a map outlining the path of the fire, it is right on the border of the nuclear plant.

According to the lead story of the May 14 *Los Alamos Monitor*, "Speaking in front of the razor wire-topped gate leading into the facility, federal and local officials repeatedly insisted that no radiation was released because of the fires."

The *Monitor* reported that two busloads of reporters were taken

to "the lab's most sensitive areas to show that facilities handling plutonium, uranium and other hazardous materials haven't been harmed. 'I'd go downwind in a heartbeat and live there the rest of my life. That's my confidence level' in the area's safety, said Gen. Eugene Habinger, security and emergency response supervisor for the U.S. Department of Energy."

Janet Post
Brooklyn, New York

Solidarity for Steelworkers

At a rally of more than 100 Steelworkers in front of Boeing's corporate headquarters on April 26 to protest Boeing's use of aluminum made by Kaiser, United Airlines pilot Dave Zapp gave greetings on behalf of the Air Line Pilots Association. The pilots union recently approved a resolution supporting the locked-out

Kaiser Steelworkers and their campaign against Boeing's use of aluminum from Kaiser produced during the lockout for production of commercial jetliners.

Also submitted to Boeing management were 15,000 postcards that have been collected from unionists telling Boeing to stop using Kaiser metal until a fair contract is signed.

Two days later 1,000 Steelworkers rallied in Spokane, Washington, where they heard David Foster, the chief negotiator of the Steelworkers union, explain how two recent rulings by the National Labor Relations Board would put pressure on Kaiser to settle the lockout.

John Naubert
Seattle, Washington

Appreciates recent articles

I'm very grateful for the obvious time and hard work that went into

the articles in the last two issues of the *Militant* [around the immigration police raid in Miami]. After studying them, I feel on much firmer ground whenever the subject comes up for discussion.

Sue Fitzsimmons
Auburn, New York

Contribute to the Militant Prisoner Fund to make reduced subscription rates possible for workers and farmers behind bars. Send your donation to the Militant at 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

The letters column is an open forum for different viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Washington, London expand their military intervention in Sierra Leone

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Washington and its imperialist ally in London are expanding their military intervention in Sierra Leone, even while posing as a bulwark against instability and war. The British government has deployed seven warships off the coast of Freetown, the nation's capital. This is London's largest naval mobilization since its war with Argentina to retake the Malvinas islands in 1982.

The latest crisis in the civil war-torn country began when the imperialist-backed regime and UN military forces there attempted to seize the diamond-rich territory controlled by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Some 18 UN troops were seized by the rebel forces May 3. When other contingents of UN military personnel went to search for the captured soldiers they were also taken hostage.

The RUF eventually seized nearly 500 UN troops, 13 armored vehicles, communications equipment, and thousands of rounds of ammunition. The RUF, which briefly headed a brutal regime in the country, currently controls about half of Sierra Leone.

In order to maintain their domination and pillage of the country's resources, the imperialist powers have fostered divisions among the different peoples in Sierra Leone—Temne, Mende, and others. Last year, the U.S. rulers campaigned for military intervention by highlighting the brutality of the rebels and other combatants who mutilated and dismembered civilians during the height of the civil war.

A cease-fire, signed in Lome, Togo, was negotiated by Washington last July, and included imposing a UN military force, which today stands at 9,000.

In response to the latest military offensive against them, RUF forces mobilized and threatened Freetown. British special forces were quickly deployed. They set up patrols on the streets of the capital and the main highway leading out of the city and occupied the Lungi international airport. There are more than 1,100 British special forces currently deployed in Sierra Leone backed by Harrier jets and attack helicopters.

The *Washington Post* reports that the British military is "coordinating the suddenly aggressive government forces and are pushing for the government to not just move the rebels back to their traditional areas of control but to seize the key diamond-mining regions that rebels control and use as their primary source of funds."

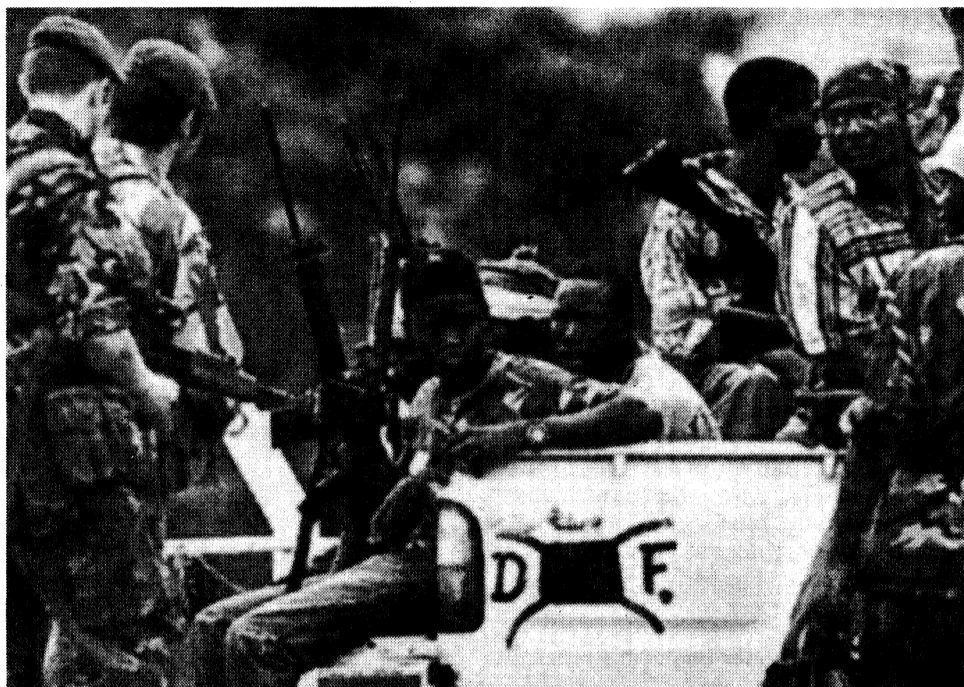
"Our objective is to finish the RUF as a military wing. It has to be crushed," said a Sierra Leone senior military official. "That is what the British want and that is what we want." In one hour-long battle, helicopter gunships pounded rebel positions while Nigerian ground troops used anti-aircraft guns, grenade launchers, and automatic weapons to take territory from the RUF forces.

On May 16 Brig. David Richards, the senior officer of British forces in Sierra Leone, said the UN forces had decided to "move into RUF heartland," and to take an offensive role.

Liberal Democratic party official Menzies Campbell noted that while the British forces are not part of the UN deployment, they have "put a bit of backbone into the UN effort." Conservative Party spokesperson Iain Duncan Smith urged the government to adopt "clearer rules of engagement" so British forces can have "the flexibility to operate as the circumstances require."

UN official Bernard Miyet conceded that under the Lome agreement last year the UN observers were "not supposed to be the peacekeeping force. We were supposed at the beginning to have a few dozen military observers."

The Clinton administration made an appointment of Democratic Party politician



British paratroopers police checkpoint in Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone. London, backed by Washington, is intervening with mineral riches of former colony in its sights.

Jesse Jackson as Washington's emissary to the region.

"A U.S. military team is now in Nigeria to determine what assistance might be needed from the international community to outfit and transport these forces as quickly as possible," said Clinton in a May 11 statement. "I have instructed our military to provide needed assistance to accelerate the deployment of troops."

In early May, a team of U.S. European Command officers met in Abuja, Nigeria, to prepare an imperialist-led military operation, which would operate under the guise of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The Nigerian government, with 3,000 troops committed to the UN force, is prepared to send an additional 2,000 soldiers. White House officials said Washington would send transport planes, communications equipment, and other logistical support to the ECOWAS operation.

'White man's burden'—again

These moves have been accompanied by a campaign in the big-business media to portray the people of Sierra Leone as lawless, violent, and incapable of governing themselves.

"Call it Democratic Man's Burden," began a feature column by Blaine Harden in the May 14 *New York Times*. Strikingly similar to the "white man's burden" used to justify colonial subjugation of the "dark races," in the last century, the article states, "Peacekeepers should arrive in sufficient numbers and with sufficient firepower to pulverize a bad actor and his supporting cast if need be." Such a force is needed, Harden says, to subdue the "thugs in Sierra Leone who smuggle diamonds, maim civilians and call themselves revolutionaries...."

"In countries like Sierra Leone, where peacekeeping demands a willingness to wage war, Democratic Man has three stark choices if he wants to salve his conscience: Fight, pay someone else to fight, or stay home and wait for an easier peace to keep."

The front cover of the May 13 *Economist* is black, with a cutout of Africa showing an African man holding a large weapon over his shoulder. "The hopeless continent," reads the main headline.

Sierra Leone, a British colony until 1961, is a country of enormous mineral wealth with an abundance of diamonds, gold, bauxite, rutile (titanium oxide), and iron. In 1930, when diamonds were discovered in the Kono mining district—now the center of the rebel-held territory—the British colonial government tried to seal off the region and made diamond mining illegal except for government-sponsored private monopolies and a

few small licensing schemes, with the vast majority of the wealth leaving the country.

The country's major trading partners are Britain and the United States where imperialist investors rake in lucrative contracts. "Rival mining companies, security firms and mercenaries...have poured weapons, trainers, and fighters into Sierra Leone, backing the government or the rebels in a bid to win cheap access to diamond fields," stated an article in the *Washington Post* last October. "Across Africa, foreign firms are fueling wars for natural resources that in some ways recall the 19th century 'scramble for Africa' by European imperial powers."

As the natural wealth of Sierra Leone continues to get sucked out of the country, the living standards of its 5.3 million people steadily deteriorate. Life expectancy is 37 years; annual income per person is \$160. It has one of the highest poverty rates in the world. Some 57 percent of the population live on less than \$1 a day. A crushing foreign debt stands at \$1.2 billion. The war has exacerbated the social crisis, leaving at least 350,000 people as refugees in neighboring Guinea.

These devastating consequences of imperialist plunder and capitalist exploitation have hit working people in Sierra Leone particularly hard. As elsewhere on the continent, Washington, London, and Paris collaborate and back forces in each country they deem best able to guarantee access to raw materials, continue payments on foreign

debt, and keep workers and peasants out of political life.

For example, under the terms of the U.S.-brokered "peace agreement" RUF leader Foday Sankoh, a former army corporal, assumed the post of vice president, and senior commanders in the RUF were given four key cabinet positions. The rebel group also retained control of Sierra Leone's diamond mines in exchange for disarming its 15,000-strong force.

For most of the civil war, which began in 1991, Sankoh's forces were allied with another rebel group, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council led by Lt. Col. John Paul Koroma, which formed a fighting force of 45,000 soldiers. In May 1997 this alliance overthrew the British-backed regime of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. Koroma became a leader of the junta that headed this new government.

Kabbah's Sierra Leone People's Party had come to power in March 1996 in an election financed by the British government. Kabbah was reinstalled in March 1998 after a Nigerian-led West African intervention force drove the junta and the alliance of rebel forces from Freetown.

Washington's goals

Koroma has since switched sides and made an alliance with the Kamajors, a rural militia of Mende tribal hunters who support the Sierra Leone regime. Koroma's forces have joined with the British forces in the attack on the RUF. The truce collapsed as the imperialists began distancing themselves from the deal, hinting that RUF leader Foday Sankoh and other rebels should be considered war criminals. "There will be no lasting peace in Sierra Leone until the diamond trade is brought under legitimate control," declared the *New York Times* editors.

Washington, moving to establish itself as the dominant imperialist power on the African continent, has been cautious about sending U.S. troops to intervene in Sierra Leone, instead relying on the British and Nigerian forces to do its dirty work. U.S. president William Clinton said May 12 that a group of seven to 10 U.S. military personnel were aboard British warships that were moving into position off the coast of Freetown. Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said the White House had no plans to send "combat troops" to Sierra Leone. Bacon said the U.S. government has deployed the *USS Thunderbolt*, a special operations vessel, in the area.

As we go to press news wires report RUF head Foday Sankoh was captured. "He has been taken to a secure location," said British officer Tony Cramp. "He is in the custody of the Sierra Leone police. He's been taken to that place in a British helicopter."

Kaiser workers build May 23 rally

BY PAUL DUNN

HOUSTON—Steelworkers are stepping up their daily picketing outside the headquarters of Maxxam Inc., the parent company of Kaiser Aluminum, in preparation for a rally here May 23 at the annual stockholders' meeting.

Some 2,900 members of the United Steelworkers of America are involved in this fight at Kaiser Aluminum. After going on strike in September 1998, the workers offered to return to work in January 1999 and keep negotiating. The company responded by locking them out. Central issues in the contract fight include company demands to cut retiree health insurance benefits, weaken seniority, and eliminate hundreds of jobs through contracting out.

Pressure is mounting on Kaiser following an April 26 announcement by the general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) that the agency will file unfair labor practice charges against the com-

pany. This move is considered a moral victory for the Steelworkers since it declares the 15-month lockout illegal. If upheld by administrative judges, Kaiser could be ordered to pay more than \$270 million in back wages to the workers.

Kaiser broke off negotiations April 25 but immediately reinstituted talks two weeks later with the union following the NLRB announcement. Recently, Daws Manufacturing, the third-largest customer after Boeing and Ford of Kaiser's Trentwood plant in Spokane, Washington, announced it is canceling all orders due to the lockout. This customer accounted for more than \$8 million of the company's sales in 1999.

The May 23 demonstration will assemble at 3:00 p.m. at the Crown Plaza Hotel, 2222 West Loop S., for a march to Maxxam headquarters at 5847 San Felipe. There will also be a candlelight vigil at the home of Maxxam's CEO Charles Hurwitz at 6:00 p.m.